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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

SOPHROSYNE: MODERATION AND SELF-KNOWLEDGE,

An Interpretation of Plato's *Charmides*

by

Susan D. Collins

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF Master of Arts

Department of Political Science

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL 1987

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An Interpretation of Plato's *Charmides* submitted by Susan D. Collins in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Date 26 August 87

ABSTRACT

Plato's *Charmides* is on the virtue known to the Greeks as *sophrosyne* and understood to comprise a synthesis of such things as grace, decorum, gentility, modesty, respectfulness, self-control, sensibleness, and discretion. As the virtue which disciplines the bodily appetites and desires, and, in particular, which moderates the sexual desire, it was believed to be central to the comprehensive health or well-being of the individual, and thus to the justice and orderliness of any regime. This thesis is a commentary on Plato's *Charmides* which seeks both to elucidate the philosopher's investigation of *sophrosyne* with an eye toward comprehending his consideration of the connection of self-knowledge to what we might commonly understand *sophrosyne* to be, moderation or sensibleness, and to illuminate the significance of *sophrosyne* both for the individual and for the political association.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Sophrosyne* and Plato's *Charmides*

Plato's dialogue *Charmides* is on *sophrosyne*, known to the Greeks as *the* virtue of the gentleman. The subject of the dialogue, however, presents an immediate problem: there is no single English word for *sophrosyne* which can do it justice. As traditionally understood, it suggests a certain harmony of soul comprising a synthesis of such things as grace, decorum, gentility, modesty, respectfulness, self-control, and thus sensibleness and discretion. As the virtue of the gentleman (*kalos kagathos*, literally, the "beautiful and good"), *sophrosyne* epitomized the kind of deportment appropriate to this rank. But as the ideal of what is beautiful and good, it set the standard for all ranks.[1]

When it is translated by a single word, however, *sophrosyne* is often translated as "moderation" because it implies, even in its remote uses, the discipline of the bodily appetites: eating, drinking, and in particular carnal sexuality. As heirs of a history and a religion replete with examples of how a lack of discipline in these matters, especially sexuality, brought on the most unhappy disasters, the Greeks were sensitive to the need of *sophrosyne* for a just and well-ordered regime. Thus, *sophrosyne* was understood to be central not only to the man, but also to the city. It bespoke the nurture by which one was made able to obey both one's rulers and oneself.[2]

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[1] *Kalos*, the word translated here as beautiful is often, as in this case, better translated as "noble." It means both "beautiful" and "noble," the Greeks seeing as one phenomenon what we distinguish as two. The reader should be aware of this to appreciate the full significance of *kalos*, which always will be translated in this thesis as "beautiful" for the sake of consistency. There is another word, *gennaios*, which means noble in the sense of wellborn, wellbred; the English word "noble" will be reserved for this term.

[2] This thesis uses "moderation" as the translation of *sophrosyne*. Although the Wests offer a good argument, on the basis of etymology, for translating *sophrosyne* by "sound-mindedness," the word "moderation" captures best this discipline of bodily appetites which would seem so fundamental to the constellation of qualities which appear to comprehend *sophrosyne* in its fullest sense. Any translation, however, is liable to do some damage, so it is best to keep in mind that there are these many other dimensions to the virtue.
For the Wests discussion, see Plato, *Charmides*, trans. Thomas G. and Grace S. West (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1986), p. 6.

Plato's dialogue ostensibly on *sophrosyne*, however, treats the virtue in a very strange manner.[3] The dialogue begins with a very long prologue in which the philosopher, returning from a fierce battle at Potidaea, immediately goes to the wrestling school of Taureas and finds Chaerephon, his old "mad" (*manikos*) friend, as well as several other men and boys.[4] Chaerephon "madly" leaps up to welcome the philosopher, and taking Socrates by the hand, leads him to sit beside one of the men there, Critias, the cousin and guardian of the younger Charmides and the man who in thirty years time is to emerge as one of the most immoderate leaders of the tyrannical oligarchic regime which ruled Athens at the end of the Peloponnesian War.[5] Upon Chaerephon's request, then, Socrates answers whatever questions the men might have about the recent battle in which they had heard many of their friends had died. [6] Having performed this service, one for which Socrates himself shows no particular relish, the philosopher then asks about the news on the home front, and in particular about philosophy and the young, how they have fared in his absence. His answer appears in the form of Charmides, an incredibly beautiful youth whose very entrance incites the men in the school to a violent display of their sexual desire. Indeed, the beauty of Charmides is such that even the young boys are mesmerized. Socrates himself wishes to converse with Charmides, so Critias explains that his young ward has been ill of late, a certain weakness or weariness (*astheneias*) in the head when he rises in the morning, and proposes that Socrates pretend to be a physician and advise the youth about the drug which can cure his illness. Thus in a playful

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[3]The fact that the word "virtue" (*arete*) is only mentioned once in the dialogue (at 158a) and never in conjunction with *sophrosyne* itself is perhaps the first strange thing.

[4]Socrates himself calls Chaerephon *manikos* (153b), but he does not mean that his friend is insane, but rather as he characterizes Chaerephon in the *Apology*, that he is impetuous and vehement. Socrates' use of the term *manikos* is just one of the "immoderate" things of the beginning of the dialogue. See *Four Texts on Socrates: Plato's "Euthyphro," "Apology," and "Crito" and Aristophanes' "Clouds,"* trans. Thomas G. and Grace S. West (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 20e-21b for Socrates' description of Chaerephon.

[5]See Xenophon, *Complete Works, ed T.E. Page, E. Capps, W.H.D. Rouse, vol 1: Hellenica Books I-V* (New York: G.E. Putnam's Sons (Loeb Classical Library), 1930), II, iii, 2-20.

[6]The dialogue itself is narrated. Socrates does not also recount these details in his narration, thus although Plato may provoke the reader's curiousity, morbid as this curiousity is, he does not indulge it.

deception, Socrates assumes the role of a doctor, but then proposes to cure Charmides' head-weakness not only with a drug, but more importantly, by producing *sophrosyne* in his soul. At this point, the question of the dialogue, "what is *sophrosyne*," finally surfaces. We are almost one quarter the way through the dialogue before it becomes explicitly focussed on its central theme, the speech and action to this point being marked by a lack of moderation: allusions to war, displays of barely-restrained sexuality, and talk of bodily illness.

The discussion of the question itself, furthermore, is rather strange. While the conversation with Charmides, which is the shortest section of the dialogue, seems to outline how we might progress in the training of the virtue *sophrosyne*, it does not explicitly discuss what would seem to be most basic: the disciplining of the bodily appetites, the immoderation of which is on display in so many ways in the prologue.

From the conversation with Charmides, we go to what is the longest section of the dialogue, the conversation with his guardian Critias. Here, we turn to a pains-taking discussion of the possibility and benefit of *sophrosyne* understood primarily as self-knowledge. Despite its rich detail, however, the discussion appears to yield little fruit. Its conclusion sees Socrates confessing not only his *aporia* (perplexity), but also his inability to "inquire beautifully" (175b). Having "suffered" through this difficult inquiry, then, we are left apparently with only the philosopher's apology, a rather dispiriting result. "We are everywhere worsted," he says (175b). To try to understand our aporia, Socrates turns attention to the investigation itself, and to the many congenial concessions we made along the way, perhaps implying we should have been less simple-minded and more stubborn. Consequently, the philosopher returns to the beautiful Charmides, who ostensibly was to have been the benefactor of this investigation, and counsels him to inquire into *sophrosyne* for himself. It is advice, it seems, we must all take seriously should we too end the dialogue in the state which the philosopher claims *this* investigation has left him: aporetic and dissatisfied with our own inability to "inquire beautifully." We must ourselves, thus, go back to the beginning and assuming that the Platonic dialogue on *sophrosyne* does in fact offer a complete consideration of the virtue, overcome our own limitations as interlocutors and begin to ask

questions of the dialogue. We are therefore, not only to inquire into *sophrosyne* itself, but by undergoing the discipline which such an inquiry necessitates, perhaps to experience the virtue first-hand.

If we try to comprehend the *Charmides* as a whole, both the deeds and the speeches, we can illuminate more clearly the many dimensions of *sophrosyne* both explicitly considered and tacitly present in the dialogue. Thus, we can better follow the trajectory of the discussion, and in particular see why it should lead to a consideration of self-knowledge. As such, this thesis employs the form of interpretation which would seem best suited to this end: the commentary. Because ultimately we wish to understand the dialogue in its entirety, and thus *sophrosyne* as it is presented in its fullness, this thesis takes as its guide what Leo Strauss called the "law of logographic necessity": "Nothing is accidental in a Platonic dialogue; everything is necessary in the place which it occurs."[7] This assumes, then, that everything, not simply the arguments, is important, and thus what might appear at times to be an excessive attention to detail and to dramatic context is really an attempt to remain true to what Plato actually wrote. In doing so, we might hope to become better able to understand the philosopher on his own ground, and thus to benefit from the full power of his teaching.[8]

1.2 The Setting and the Characters

Since it is a dramatic work, the setting and characters which comprise the dialogue presumably have some bearing on its teaching. With an eye toward elucidating this teaching, then, it is beneficial to consider in a preliminary way certain details of both.

The *Charmides* is set in 431 B.C. just after the battle at Potidaea which heralded the beginning of the long and devastating struggle between Athens and Sparta known as the Peloponnesian War. This dialogue on moderation, then, is overshadowed by a war which,

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[7] Leo Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 60.

[8] To this end, the thesis follows the Wests' literal translation except in explicitly noted cases, and as already noted, by substituting "moderation" for "sound-mindedness." In certain cases, also, the transliterated Greek word is provided for the sake of comparison. References to the dialogue itself are followed by the Stephanus page number in parenthesis.

according to Thucydides, was the greatest war which had ever befallen Greece.[9] It was a war brought on partly by the excesses of the Athenian empire, but which was itself to lead to the disintegration of the Athenian regime and the imposition on Athens itself of its most terrible regime, that of the "Thirty Tyrants." As backdrop for the dialogue, the Peloponnesian War is a constant reminder of the ugly depths to which a lack of political moderation can lead. And since the war saw the Athenians battling and finally submitting to Sparta, that state which throughout Greek history was said to epitomize moderation, the dramatic timing of this discussion about the virtue is especially ironic.

The discussion itself is set in a wrestling school, a public Paleastra frequented by many men and boys. As such the conversation which ensues between the philosopher and his two interlocutors takes place before a jury of sorts, the crowd of men who encircle the three main participants. By making it a narrated dialogue, however, Plato places a frame around the discussion. The actual discussion, then, has already occurred; Socrates is recounting its details to an unnamed listener. All we know about this anonymous auditor is whatever can be gleaned from Socrates' few references to him, or what can be surmised from the character of the narration itself. Socrates refers variously to him as "comrade (*hetaire*), "friend" (*phile*), and "noble one" (*gennaion*) (154e, 155c, 155d), but he actually appears to be a foreigner of some sort; as his "comrade" is apparently unacquainted with Athenian politics, Socrates must apprise him of the battle at Potidaea which had occurred shortly before (153b). The last direct reference to this listener is made early in the narration (155d), and we are left with only these few details by which to understand his role in the dialogue. The fact that it is a narrated, as opposed to an acted dialogue, however, is itself important. It allows the

[9]Thucydides, *Complete Works*, ed. T.E. Page et al., vol 1: *History of the Peloponnesian War Books I and II*, trans. Charles Forster Smith (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons (Loeb Classical Library), 1929), p. 3. The battle at Potidaea itself was occasioned by the revolt of a colony which was rightfully the colony of Corinth, but which was a tributary ally of Athens. In retaliation against the Corinthians for some past offences, the Athenians forced Potidaea to open its defences, give over hostages, and send away its Corinthian magistrates. Upon its revolt, the Athenians then besieged the colony and thus essentially forced the Potidaeans into the arms of Sparta, the only power in the Peloponnese able to match Athens.

philosopher a certain reflexivity in the recounting of the discussion: he is able both to reflect upon his own deeds and speeches, and make comments upon the other participants. By recounting the discussion for a second time, then, Socrates is not only reconsidering the arguments, but he is also re-examining himself.[10]

The first character to appear in the dialogue, other than the well-known philosopher, is Chaerephon, Socrates' *manikos* friend, who, when he appears in Plato's dialogues, generally acts as Socrates' intercessor with others.[11] Here, Chaerephon makes a brief appearance as the man both who represents the interests of the many men in the Paleastra, and who facilitates the evening's discussion by seating Socrates next to Critias. After his brief appearance at the beginning of the dialogue, he is not heard from again.

The next man we encounter is Critias, Socrates' major interlocutor in the dialogue. It is most ironic that the two men should meet and discuss *sophrosyne* at this time, for Critias, as a leading figure in the rule of the "Thirty Tyrants," was said by Xenophon to be "in the days of that oligarchy, the most rapacious and cruel and murderous of them all."[12] Critias was a notorious Spartophile; enamored by the discipline, order, and strength of the Spartan regime, he sought, as a leader of the "Thirty Tyrants," to impose that same kind of regime on an Athens he believed had become immoderate and weak. During the reign of the Thirty,

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[10]His account of his reaction to Charmides' beauty is a good example of this. See 155b-156a.

[11]See *Apology* 20e-21b and *Gorgias* 447b. As age and age cohorts turn out to be of significance in the dialogue, one thing which we should mention about Socrates is that he is at this time approximately 36 years old. According to the dialogue, furthermore, he also by this time appears to have somewhat of a reputation. See 156a.

[12]Most of what we know of Critias' involvement in this tyrannical regime is through Xenophon's *Hellenica*. Xenophon has Critias saying there that the Spartan constitution is the best constitution, the one which the Athenians should follow. When the Thirty Tyrants took power in Athens, they were supported by the Spartans. See Xenophon, *Hellenica Books I-V* II, iii, 2-20. Our other main source of information about Critias is Xenophon's *Recollections* (or *Memorabilia* as it is translated in the Loeb edition). See *Complete Works*, vol. 4: *Memorabilia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), I, ii, 12-17.
Other valuable references are W.K.C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, vol 3: *The Fifth Century Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 298-304 and Peter Krenz, *The Thirty at Athens* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), pp. 44-47 and p. 130 where Krenz quotes the interesting epigram placed under a statue erected in honor of Critias, "This memorial is for the good men who for a short time restrained the accursed Athenian people from hubris."

however, Critias and his fellow leaders murdered many innocent people. Having at first confined their executions to unpopular informers and sympathizers of the previously corrupt democracy, they soon were arbitrarily executing innocent people one any pretext in order to confiscate their property. They attempted also to implicate others in their deeds by forcing their participation in this murderous campaign. As Socrates himself recounts in his *Apology*, he and four others were ordered to arrest Leon of Salamis, a man who was considered quite just. When the other four left to carry out this order, Socrates departed and went home. His defiance of Critias and the Thirty, he says, put his own life at risk.[13] Socrates was bound, then, to incur Critias' wrath. Although Critias was known to have been an associate of Socrates, it is also known, through Xenophon, that Critias and the philosopher soon came to be at odds with one another. This was evidenced particularly during the reign of the Thirty when Critias finally created a law which, as he explained, forbid the philosopher "to hold conversation with the young," a most ironic thing given the events of this dialogue.[14]

Critias was given guardianship of his cousin Charmides when Charmides' own father Glaucon passed away. Critias was never known to have married nor to have had children of his own; thus Charmides, as his ward, became the benefactor (if that's the right word) of Critias' full attention.[15] It can be assumed, then, that Charmides was educated, so far as possible, in a Spartan fashion.[16] This seems to be borne out by the dialogue: although he is

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[13] *Apology*, 32cd.

[14] Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, I, ii, 33. Xenophon contends that Critias always bore a grudge against Socrates for reprimanding him in public as being no more able to keep himself away from the beautiful young Euthydemus than "pigs can help rubbing themselves against stones" (I, ii, 30-31).

[15] J.K. Davies, *Athenian Propertied Families 600-300 B.C.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 326-331. Critias is approximately 27 years old in this dialogue; it is not known exactly when he became the guardian of Charmides, but it is assumed to have been when Charmides was quite young.

[16] The education of the youth in Sparta was considered to be of primary importance. All Spartans underwent a system of military training which in its rigorousness generally offended the sensibilities of the more individualistic Athenians, with the exception of men like Critias. It was a training which, according to the Spartans however, was the only way to true self-rule and thus to true freedom. This is why moderation was said to epitomize their regime. Because of this self-rule, Spartans only considered other Spartans to be their equals. For a discussion of Spartan education and the ideals it promoted, see Werner Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, vol 1: *Archaic Greece, The Mind of Athens*, trans. Gilbert Highet (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 77-98.

extraordinarily beautiful and attracts many lovers, Charmides manifests the same kind of discipline and submission to authority which characterized the Spartan youth. Although Xenophon says little about Charmides' involvement in the regime of the Thirty, he does say that Charmides died fighting alongside his cousin Critias in the battle through which the democrats finally regained control of the city.[17] Xenophon, however, attests to the fact that Charmides did become a follower of Socrates.[18] Charmides is just coming into maturity when the dialogue takes place.

What is perhaps particularly significant about the characters of the *Charmides*, and especially about Critias, is that when Socrates was finally brought to trial and convicted of capital crimes, the accusations against him were formulated with his associations with men like Critias in mind. It was said, that is, that the philosopher was responsible for their corruption and subsequent malefactions against the city. Xenophon deals with this charge by saying that in fact Socrates made men like Critias better when they were in his presence; that it was, finally, the people who corrupted Critias when he "got among men who put lawlessness before justice."[19] Xenophon thus deflects the charges of the people against Socrates with an ironic rebuke concerning their own corrupting influences. He does not, however, tackle the more serious charge that Socrates, by making these men "better" actually made them more powerful, and thereby made them more dangerous to the political association. The question is whether Socrates, by questioning in public the common beliefs of his own city, did not in the last analysis set a pernicious example.

What is very puzzling about Plato's *Charmides* in this respect is that it offers no apparent reminders of the subsequent fates of either Critias or Charmides. Read unencumbered with the historical knowledge of their roles in the regime of the Thirty Tyrants, one could scarce anticipate those roles or fates. Indeed, there is no apparent evidence of either Critias' later rapaciousness and cruelty, or of any tendency in this regard by his ward. The

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[17]Xenophon, *Hellenica*, II, iv, 19.
[18]Indeed, at one point, Xenophon has Socrates attempting to shame a reluctant Charmides to take a more active role in politics. *Memorabilia* III, vi, 1 -9. See also *Symposium*, i, 2-4 and ii, 19-20.
[19]Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, I, ii, 24.

dialogue, however, perhaps does offer the most important view of Socrates' association, and thus his influence, on such men: it shows him in conversation with a gifted youth who is at his most impressionable age, and thus it puts on display the philosopher's approach to educating such a young man. The dialogue is titled *Charmides*; thus even though the major portion of the time is spent in conversation with Critias, we are cautioned not to ignore the fact that we finally must explain how Charmides' presence ultimately determines the framework in which the dialogue proceeds. It is made explicit at the beginning of the discussion that the young man is the reason behind this investigation into *sophrosyne*, and he is to be its benefactor should it bear fruit. The historical facts may inform us of the fate of Charmides and his guardian, but Plato, by putting his own teacher on display in conversation with these two men, shows the limitations of the philosopher's attempt to educate and thus better them. As the dialogue is titled *Charmides*, and is "on *sophrosyne*," understanding this education can only benefit our inquiry into this virtue.

2. PROLOGUE

The *Charmides* begins with the philosopher returning from the battle at Potidaea. The battle had come about because Potidaea, a tributary which Athens claimed as rightfully its own, revolted in favour of an alliance with Sparta. It is this battle which signals the beginning of the Peloponnesion War.

It is in the evening of the "day before" that Socrates comes from the army camp. Like Odysseus, to whom he later refers, he has been a long time away, so the philosopher goes with pleasure to the places which he had frequented formerly in his leisure. Released from the duties of the city, he is permitted again to partake in his own thing, conversation. He goes "in particular" to the wrestling school of Taureas. Of Taureas or his school we know very little, except that the school is right across from a temple. And of the temple, we know only that it is dedicated to "the Queen." It might seem strange, at first glance, that a conversation about a virtue of the soul should take place in a training school for the body, but then the training of the body, and the effect of this training on the soul may be an important consideration in the inculcation of moderation.[20]

The philosopher has returned to the city with others, but he now goes about his leisure alone. Like Odysseus, the others perhaps have gone home to their families. Socrates gives no indication of a desire to see his wife and children, but rather says that he went in search of those with whom "we have intercourse"(156a).[21] He finds at the school of Taureas many people with whom he is familiar, but some whom he does not recognize.[22] Perhaps some of the latter are foreigners. In any event, we are made aware that the susequent conversation

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[20]While this consideration seems expressly ignored in the dialogue, the fact that we are in such a school should serve to remind us constantly of the connection of moderation to the body.

[21]This is the literal translation of *tas sunetheis*. The use of this term to denote the relationship with one's familiars hints at the immoderation which will characterize the beginning of this dialogue on moderation. Also, Socrates may not yet be married, but there is precedent for suspecting that Socrates prefers conversation over his own kin. See Xenophon, *Symposium* 9.7 with 2.10.

[22]It is useful, in a dialogue which discusses questions of knowledge at length, to be made aware of at least the main words used for knowledge in the dialogue. This is the first occurrence of one of them, *gignoskein*, translated "recognize," and having the sense of "coming to know," "realize," "perceive."

takes place before such a mixed audience.

Although he arrives unexpectedly, those who recognize Socrates greet him from "afar, one from one place, another from another" (153b). It is, however, the "mad" (*manikos*) Chaerephon who jumps up excitedly to take hold of the philosopher. Chaerephon is the man who, according to the story in the *Apology*, solicited from the Delphic oracle the ironic verdict concerning Socrates' wisdom, which in turn was responsible in some way for turning Socrates' attention to the realm of human affairs.[23] Chaerephon asks the first question of the dialogue, "Socrates, how were you saved from the battle" (153b)? After Socrates explains to his listener that Chaerephon means the particular battle at Potidaea, the philosopher replies enigmatically to Chaerephon's question, "Just so, as you see" (153b). There is apparently nothing about Socrates' presence, however, to indicate that he has just come from a battle; his appearance seems to Chaerephon to belie the reports they have been hearing, that the battle was fierce (*sphodra*, cf. 160c), and that many of their own friends had died. Perhaps this is why he seeks the further assurance that Socrates was actually present at the battle. Of course, Chaerephon had not meant his first question to be interpreted as asking in what physical form Socrates had survived, but rather how Socrates *was able* to survive. Was he, for example, merely lucky, or was his own virtue, his "sensibleness," a factor? Chaerephon immediately insists on knowing everything clearly. It seems others have given him less than satisfactory reports, and now he wants to hear what the philosopher has to say. Moreover, it is Chaerephon who leads Socrates to a seat next to Critias, the son of Callaeschrus.[24] Once seated, Socrates willingly answers whatever anyone asks him about the happenings of the

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[23]Plato, *Apology of Socrates*, trans. Thomas G. and Grace S. West, *Four Texts on Socrates: Plato's "Euthyphro," "Apology," and "Crito" and Aristophanes' "Clouds"* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 20e-21b.

[24]As the Wests later point out, Callaeschrus, *Kalos-aischrus*, means "Beautiful-ugly" or "Noble-shameful." Critias is an aristocrat or nobleman, but as the dialogue bears out, he is not unfamiliar with the shameful. Also, it should be noted that seating arrangements (or "social geometry") often have a dramatic, or symbolic significance in Platonic dialogues. The seating of participants is an explicit issue in, e.g., The *Republic* (328c), *Protagoras* (310a, 317d-e), and *Symposium* (175a, 175c, 177e, 213ab, 222e). And it certainly is in this dialogue (cf. 155c). Thus it may be significant that it is the "mad" Chaerephon who selects Socrates' place, and not the philosopher himself.

army camp. "One asked one thing," he says, "another asked another" (153d). Despite his terse initial replies, Socrates must be familiar enough with the situation at Potidaea to satisfy everyone's curiousity. But if Socrates' anonymous listener, or we readers of the dialogue are at all curious about these details, we are quickly disappointed: appetites which might be whetted for an exciting account of war and battle are made to go hungry. Nor do we hear, explicitly, the answer to the first question of the dialogue, how Socrates was saved from the battle; instead we are treated to a conversation on the virtue *sophrosyne*.[25]

Having reported the news from the front, Socrates turns to the news "here," asking specifically about the things which interest him: "about philosophy, how things stood with it, and about the young, whether any among them had become distinguished for wisdom or beauty or both" (153d). Critias takes it upon himself to answer. He ignores Socrates' first question about philosophy to speak to his second about the young. And about the young, he ignores the matter of wisdom to speak about beauty, saying, "About the beautiful ones, Socrates, in my opinion, you will know very soon" (153d).[26] Of Socrates' questions, then, only one is immediately discussed, the beauty of the young, and in particular, of Charmides. In the stead of the other matters, love of wisdom and wisdom, we participate in an inquiry into what *sophrosyne* is, and whether or not it is in Charmides. Are Socrates' other explicit concerns, then, addressed by this inquiry?

Critias' attention has been drawn toward the door where a number of youths are entering. He says that Socrates will know soon about the beautiful ones, "for those entering

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[25]We have one account of Socrates' actions at Potidaea from Alcibiades. Much of what Alcibiades says expressly concerns Socrates' *sophrosyne*: "Now first of all he faced trials not only better than I did but better than all the others. Whenever we were cut off somewhere and compelled to go without food, as happens in campaigns, the others were nothing compared to him in self-control . . . And again, in regard to resistence against the winter -- for winters are terrible there -- all the rest that he did was amazing . . . 'What sort of thing the strong man did and dared' there on campaign once, is worth hearing. Once, he had gotten a thought, and he stood on the same spot from dawn on, considering it; and when he made no progress, he did not let up but stood searching. . . " *Symposium*, trans. Seth Benardete, 219e-220e.

[26]The word translate "know" here and consistently through the Wests' translation, is *eidenai* meaning "to know" in the sense of "to see," empirically or with the mind. It is related to the word for "form," *eidos*.

happen to be heralds (*prodromoi*) and lovers (*erastai*) of the one who is reputed to be the most beautiful, right now at least" (154a).[27] In marked contrast to the solitary entrance of Socrates, a large tumultuous party of men and boys now enters with a particularly handsome youth at its center.

About this well-advertised beauty, Socrates wishes to know two things: who and whose [son] is he?" After observing that Socrates probably already knows him, Critias naturally answers with the young man's name, Charmides, and then says that he is "the son of our uncle Glaucon and my cousin" ((154b).[28] In a deeper sense, the question is not so easily answered: Socrates will soon be stripping young Charmides' soul to see who Charmides truly is; moreover we subsequently discover that Critias is in fact the young man's guardian, in effect his surrogate father. Critias is the man, then, directly responsible for Charmides' nurture. Socrates emphatically acknowledges knowing Charmides, adding that even as a boy, he was in no way "ordinary." Here, Socrates swears an oath, "by Zeus," his first of four oaths in the dialogue. So the youth had early revealed some special potential. We are interested therefore, in judging for ourselves, "how mature he is and what sort of person he has become" (154b).[29]

As Critias speaks, the beautiful one himself enters, apparently more than fulfilling the expectations aroused by Critias' words.[30] Recounting his own reactions to his anonymous comrade, however, Socrates admits that he is not a discriminating judge of such beauties, "because almost all who have just reached maturity appear beautiful to me" (154b). Perhaps

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[27] *Prodromoi* is actually a military term referring to scouts, or men sent on before to reconnoitre. Charmides does seem to have a virtual army of lovers.

[28] Socrates had not asked whose cousin he was, but given Critias' guardian role, it is appropriate that he should mention himself in the same breath as he does the name of Charmides' natural father.

[29] The question will arise what we mean exactly by maturity, whether it is the full-growth of the body or the full-growth of the soul. Ordinarily, however, we understand maturity, as Critias has implied, to mean at least that one's fundamental character is basically formed; that we can expect, generally, little change in the future in the sort of person one has become when mature.

[30] Critias has said that Charmides is most beautiful, "right now at least," reminding us that beauty of body fades with age, unlike that other thing which we do not explicitly discuss, wisdom. Indeed, it is strange that Socrates should ask at all about wisdom with respect the the young when wisdom seems to come only with age.

the philosopher does not have physical beauty in mind; that, rather, there is something about young souls of a certain age which seems beautiful to Socrates. As this word "maturity" (*helikia*) implies, Charmides has just become fully grown; he has reached, then, the bloom of youth, the prime of his physical body attended by all of the passion of youth. There is something beautiful to the philosopher about this prime, but he acknowledges that even so, Charmides appeared to be special, "wonderous . . . in both stature and beauty" (154c).[31] As Socrates will later elaborate, Charmides descends from ancestors who are noted for beauty, stature, and virtue. Charmides appears to have carried through at least two of these qualities of his fore-runners. No mention is made, that is, of virtue, which would seem to presume not a maturity or prime of the body, but a maturity and prime of the soul. Presumably, Charmides has not yet reached this prime of the soul (cf. 162de).

Socrates says that upon his entering, everyone's attention was concentrated on Charmides. Everyone except Socrates himself, that is, for he expressly notices the reactions of those even younger than Charmides, the boys. What is wondrous to Socrates about the boys is that all of them, even the littlest, are captivated by the appearance of Charmides, contemplating him "as if he were a statue" (154c). They are treating Charmides as a soul-less work of art, captivated simply by his physical beauty. Admittedly, it is surprising that sexually immature children should be so captivated. Does their response to Charmides suggest that his beauty transcends the erotic?

It is the mad Chaerephon who directs the philosopher's attention back to Charmides, asking, "How does the youth appear to you, Socrates? Is he not fair of face (*euprosopos*, literally "good-faced.")?" Socrates replies, "Preternaturally so (*hyperphuos*, literally "beyond nature."). Chaerophon next articulates the wish apparently common to the other infatuates, "But if he should be willing to strip, he will seem to you to be faceless (*aprosopos*), so altogether beautiful is he in his form" (154d). The beauty of Charmides' form, then, would draw one's attention from his "good-face" to his beautiful body. It would thereby have the effect of diminishing Charmides' identity by concealing the characteristic features of his

[31]This is the first occurrence of that "wonder" (*thauma*) which is said to be the basis of philosophy.

face.[32] It is an apt reminder of how impersonal, how undiscriminating, certain manifestations of *eros* naturally are, and consequently why one might wish to control them in oneself.

Socrates, however, while appearing enthusiastic at the prospect of such a disrobing, immediately directs attention away from Charmides' body to his soul. He swears for a second time, "Heracles! The *man* you speak of is not to be withstood, if only he happens to have one little thing bes"ides (155d, my emphasis). When Critias wishes to know what this "little thing" is, Socrates replies, "if in respect to his soul, he happens to be of a good nature (*eupephukos*)" (155e).[33] When Socrates first swears about Charmides, it is about Charmides as a boy, and he does so in the name of Zeus the Father. Having good nature in his soul, however, would make Charmides a man, or perhaps more than a man, a hero or demigod like Heracles. Socrates swears here as if in recognition of this great hero, the unbeatable man and, as Prodicus tells us, the man who chose virtue over vice. Does Socrates wonder, then, if Charmides, like Heracles, will choose virtue?[34]

The philosopher wishes to investigate Charmides' soul, if it "chances" (*tuchanei*) to have good nature. He does not say what this good nature is, though of course moderation and

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[32]Christopher Bruell, "Socratic Politics and Self-Knowledge: An Interpretation of Plato's *Charmides*," *Interpretation* 6 (1977), p. 144.

[33]The young man's face was "preternaturally" beautiful; it seems, as Socrates now says, that his true nature is to be found in his soul. Is the beauty of the face, then, without the presence of the soul simply like that of a statue, "outside of nature?"

[34]According to Xenophon in the *Memorabilia*, Socrates relates Prodicus' story about Heracles choosing virtue over vice in order to exhort his companions "to practise self-control in the matter of eating and drinking and sexual indulgence," three things which surprisingly are not explicitly discussed in the dialogue. According to Socrates, Prodicus begins his story of Heracles by saying that Heracles was just passing out of boyhood into young manhood at the time "wherein the young, now becoming their own masters, show whether they will approach life by the path of virtue or the path of vice." At this time, Heracles was approached by two women, one bearing the name Vice (or Happiness, as her friends called her), and the other bearing the name Virtue. Prodicus relates that, after hearing the two women's accounts of the good things they offered, Heracles chooses Virtue over Vice. Socrates' version of Prodicus' story also suggests, upon closer reading, that Heracles did not choose Virtue for her own sake, as few people do, but rather for the honor and power which she promised him. The philosopher even suggests that Heracles is attracted by a certain kind of immortality to "live on, sung and remembered for all time." See *Memorabilia* I, ii, 1-2 and 21-34.
As the Wests note, Heracles was one of the tutelary gods of wrestling schools and wrestling.

self-knowledge become the topic of the evening's discussion. And the philosopher does not say that having a good nature will make Charmides all-beautiful, as Chaerophon suggests the beauty of Charmides' "form" does; rather, the philosopher says that if in addition to his beautiful body, Charmides has good nature in his soul, he will be unbeatable, like Heracles, that son of a god and a mortal.[35]

Addressing Critias directly, Socrates suggests that it is perhaps not simply by chance that Charmides would have good nature, that as he is from Critias' family, this would be fitting. Critias states that Charmides is a gentleman (*kalos kai agathos*) in this respect.[36] Socrates then ungentlemanly proposes that they strip this part of Charmides, meaning presumably the soul, and contemplate it before contemplating Charmides' "form."[37] When Charmides enters, he is clothed; reviewing his body or entire form in its natural state would require stripping this convention of clothing away. Socrates suggests that the soul is also "clothed," and that it is only revealed in its natural state when stripped of its opinions and the opinions held about it. Judging from what Socrates does, one can accomplish this stripping by conversing (*dialegesthai*), which would seem to suggest that conversing is an erotic activity. How so? Does such conversing expose the "erotic things" of the soul? Does it require, as does stripping the body, overcoming one's shame at exposing parts one would have wished to have left clothed? And does such stripping of the soul, like the stripping of the body, diminish one's characteristic identity?

Charmides is at an age, Socrates suggests, where he is now quite willing for such "conversing." Critias emphatically assures him that such is the case, even going so far as to claim that Charmides is both philosophic and, in others' opinion as well as his own, quite

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[35]There is some confusion as to Heracles' parentage: although we know Alcmene is Heracles' mother, there is some question as to whether Amphitryon or Zeus is his father.' This makes Socrates' oath even more apt, given that there is a suggestion that, at least in terms of nurturing, Critias and not Glaucon is Charmides' true father.

[36]According to Critias, then, Charmides is both "beautiful and good," (*kalos kai agathos*), for this is what the words we translate as "gentleman" literally mean. The question will arise if sophrosyne is both beautiful and good. If it is, then its presence might explain why those who are truly beautiful and good are so.

[37]How the word "form" applies here is ambiguous. Socrates may be seen as suggesting that by stripping Charmides' soul we will be able to see *its* form.

poetic. Critias seems confident that the youth is quite capable of holding his own, and will prove a credit to his guardian.[38] Socrates suggests that "this beautiful quality" which Critias shares is due to their kinship with Solon. Socrates is probably best understood here as accepting Critias claim to poetry, but ignoring his claim to philosophy. In any case, Socrates wishes "to see for himself," to be shown (*epedeixas*) the youth and to converse with him.

The philosopher then informs us of Critias' special relationship with Charmides, saying "for even if he happened to be still younger, surely it would not be shameful for him to converse with us in front of you who are at once his guardian and cousin" (155a). As Charmides' cousin, Critias shares in his nature; as his guardian, he has had responsibility for his nurture. There is, then, or should be, a very strong bond between the youth and his more mature cousin. It would not be shameful to converse with Charmides in front of Critias, for as the guardian of Charmides' soul, Critias can dictate what is and is not shameful for the young man's ears. Critias approves of what Socrates proposes as "beautifully spoken" (155a).[39] Thus he then turns to his slave boy, and telling him precisely what to say, orders him to call Charmides.

According to Critias, Charmides has been complaining about a certain "head-weakness" (*astheneias*), and Critias suggests that Socrates pose as a doctor who has knowledge of some drug for the head.[40] Critias thus casts the philosopher into the role of a healer, and Socrates does not object. He agrees to a certain deception in order to be shown Charmides.[41] When Critias asks him what would prevent their perpetrating this deception,

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[38]As we learn later, Charmides proves not to be as poetic as he and others opine. Is this reputation a piece of his soul's clothing which will be stripped away? See 162d.

[39]This is the first instance of beauty (*kalon*) being applied to speech.

[40]As Hyland observes, the head-weakness is evidence that Charmides is not quite as perfect as Critias had suggested. Drew Hyland, *The Virtue of Philosophy: An Interpretation of Plato's Charmides* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1981), p.35. What the Wests tranlate here as "have knowledge" is *epistasthai*, the verb which is related to *episteme* which is often translated as "science," but in the West translation consistently as knowledge. *Episteme* first occurs at 165c, and then becomes the predominant knowledge word in the conversation. As its usual translation suggests, *episteme* is most often understood as "scientific" or technical knowing, though it is not restricted to this.

[41]It is difficult to see why Critias suddenly suggests this pretense. It is perhaps a playful ploy on Critias' part to deceive his young ward as to Socrates' identity. But

Socrates says "nothing" (155b). Can Charmides then not tell a true doctor from a pretender(cf. 170e.)? Having agreed to Critias' terms, however, Socrates asks that Critias just permit the youth to come. Critias, his guardian, says confidently that he will come.

We know something of the young man, then, before we are formally introduced. That Charmides is beautiful physically and that he is surrounded by erotic admirers has been emphasized. And, although we do not yet know if he has a good nature nor much about the quality of his nurture, we do know that Critias, who has been praising the beauty and wisdom of his ward, has been responsible in a major way for the youth's education. Investigating what Charmides is, then, may also involve some conversing with his teacher. As we later see, Charmides himself will point to Critias as his educator on *sophrosyne* (see 162b).

The young man's coming produces both laughter and violence. It seems that despite the arrangement whereby Charmides is to converse with Socrates, the other men wish also for some kind of intercourse with him. Thus they push at each other in earnest until the man at either end is forced out of his place. This youth, whom Critias is about to claim is most moderate, produces a most immoderate response, comic and boisterous. If the laughter, as it would seem, does not come from the men who are in earnest, then it perhaps belongs on the narrative level, an expression of Socrates' own view of what these men take seriously.[42] Be that as it may, their behavior would not seem to reflect well on the status of moderation in Athens. Their eagerness for access to Charmides' body leads to a comic battle among them.[43] Amidst the melee, this object of so many men's *eros* goes obediently to sit between his guardian and the philosopher.

For the second time directly addressing the friend (*phile*) to whom he is recounting this story, Socrates says that once actually faced with this beautiful lad, he was at a loss (*aporia*), and the boldness (*thrasutes*) which was to help him converse was knocked out of him. For as Critias was explaining to Charmides that Socrates had knowledge of the drug for

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[41](cont'd) it may be evidence that Critias is habitually given to deceptions. His honesty later becomes an issue in the dialogue.

[42]As Benardete suggests, it is unclear in the way Socrates speaks of the laughter where it belongs, at the dramatic or the narrative level. See Seth Benardete, "On Interpreting Plato's *Charmides*," *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 11 (1986), p.15.

[43]Thus, the Athenians are battling over yet another "ward of Sparta."

the head, Charmides looked at Socrates about to ask a question.[44] Between the "irresistable" look in the youth's eyes and what Socrates himself saw inside his cloak, Socrates claims he could no longer control himself. He says so as delicately as he can to his "noble" (*gennaion*) friend whom he again addresses directly. Socrates' narration of his reaction to the beautiful Charmides suggests that the philosopher, like the many men who crowd around in a circle, cannot finally control his desire, but perhaps his characterization of the incident is more for the sake of his noble friend whom he addresses twice in the course of telling about it.[45] We notice, for example, that by his own report, Socrates does not lose such complete control of himself as to be incapable of reflecting that the poet Cydias was wiser than he on erotic matters.[46] Suffice it to say, there are grounds for suspecting that Socrates was not overwhelmed by his desire for Charmides. Unlike the other men in the Palaestra, faced with powerful desire, Socrates looks into himself and reflects upon how one should beware of being over-powered by another, or more specifically, of being over-powered by one's own desire for another. Such a thought is apparently sufficient to allow Socrates to regain enough control of himself to answer Charmides' question.[47] The fawn, recognizing the lion, would appear to have successfully evaded capture and destruction.

Socrates tells the young man that the cure for the head is actually two things, a certain leaf and a certain incantation (*epodes*).[48] The leaf, a natural remedy, alledgedly gives no benefit without the incantation.[49] The two must be used simultaneously, chanting the incantation as one touches with the leaf, if the drug is to make one "altogether healthy."

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[44]We learn later Charmides remembers Socrates from before.
[45]This is the last time Socrates is to address him directly.
[46]It is ironic that Socrates should say here that a poet is wiser than he on erotic matters, given his claim in the *Symposium* that erotic matters are the only thing he knows. But it is also possible that Cydias, being otherwise unknown, is a creation of Socrates and serves as an example to his friend of how the philosopher learns from the poets by reflecting upon himself. See *Symposium*, 212ab.
[47]Cf 159cd, 160b.
[48]*Epodes*, a charm, "singing over" chant. It is important to note the musical quality of the incantation, for the question arises how "beautiful speeches" can produce moderation given that parts of the soul are not rational.
[49]It is not said whether the incantation gives any benefit without the leaf, but cf. 156b.

Assuming the incantation has a general power, applicable to any patient, Charmides prepares to write it down from Socrates' dictation. He is apparently accustomed to ready compliance with his every wish. Unexpectedly, however, Socrates asks if Charmides would do violence to him in order to gain possession of the chant, or if he is willing to persuade the philosopher. Why at this point Socrates wishes to test the young man's predilection for violence is somewhat of a mystery. Is it because great beauties are typically spoiled, and apt to become increasingly imperious? Or does Socrates suspect the ward on the basis of his guardian? Be that as it may, Charmides laughs, the second instance of laughter in the dialogue and the first on the part of Charmides. He laughs at the suggestion that in order to get what he wants he might do violence to a fellow citizen, a shameful thing; we see later that he is quite willing to use force under certain circumstances.[50] But Charmides now indicates that he'll abide by the results of his persuasive efforts. He also reveals that he remembers Socrates. Apparently the youths with whom he associates talk about the philosopher, and Charmides remembers from when he was still younger Socrates associating with his cousin and guardian.[51]

Socrates will speak more frankly to Charmides about the incantation now that the young man has declared his preference for persuasion. Before, when the philosopher was overcome by Charmides' beauty, he professed himself at a loss as to how he might show the young man the incantation's power, so he tested Charmides to see if he was willing for *logos*. The young man must be willing for *logos* it seems before Socrates can speak to him about the incantation.

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[50]The first instance of laughter being in conjunction with violence, it is interesting that the second occurrence should arise in this context, the relationship of persuasion and violence. As Socrates suggests at the end of the dialogue, when violence is employed it denies the use of counsel as a form of persuasion. Laughter itself is a most effective weapon against persuasion insofar as it manifests a certain lack of respect toward the argument under consideration. See 175d and 176d.

[51]When Socrates asks Charmides if he has his "name" precisely, the young man replies "If I am not doing an injustice" (156a). He is saying, according to the formula of justice in the *Republic* which will arise under the guise of moderation in the *Charmides*, that he believes he has Socrates' name precisely (*akribus*) unless he is not minding his own business. But Socrates will later suggest that the activity of naming, of "writing and reading names," immediately presumes a kind of meddling in other people's business. See 161de.

Socrates now asks what Charmides thinks of the argument stated by good doctors.[52] They say, according to Socrates, that attempting to treat the part without the whole is "mindless." To illustrate their claim, Socrates begins with the eyes, saying that if these are in pain, then the head must be made healthy before the eyes can be in good condition. One cannot treat the head by itself, however, without ministering also to the whole body. The head is not sufficient unto itself, then; we must pay attention to the whole body with which it is associated. On the basis of this principle, the good doctors arrange their regimens. Their knowledge of complete health is what guides their practice. When the philosopher asks Charmides if this is "beautifully spoken," and if the young man accepts the argument, Charmides replies "more than anything" (156c).[53] There may be more to Charmides' sickness, then, than simply a weakness in the head; the argument which the young man accepts points to the possibility of an illness of the body or even a problem with his eyes, despite their incredible beauty. Charmides, however, has only complained about his head; he has not mentioned any symptom other than this.

Hearing Charmides' praise of the argument emboldened the philosopher; or so he claims. The boldness which he required to converse easily with the beautiful young man once again arose, and Socrates says he was rekindled back to life. Thus he suggests that when he was overcome by desire for Charmides' body, when he was "inflamed" in this way, he was somehow brought close to death. This seems strange, for such great desire is generally thought to be the very fire of life. For Socrates, however, this desire, taking him out of "himself," taking away his power to converse singlemindedly with the beautiful young man, brought upon him a kind of death. Does he mean by this that when one's spirit or what he characterizes as boldness is overwhelmed by the demands of the body, when this boldness cannot give the needed support to one's reason or mind so that it remains free to do its proper work, that this is somehow like death?

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[52]These good doctors are Greek. Cf.156d.

[53]Does Socrates require at least the acceptance on Charmides' part that the parts must be understood as parts of a coherent whole in order to continue his conversation?

Having been "rekindled" back to life, the philosopher goes on to explain that he learned the incantation while a soldier in the army. Even while away on campaign, then, Socrates makes time to investigate such things. The incantation is foreign, taught to him by a Thracian doctor who regards his king, Zalmoxis, as a god. Socrates, it seems, is not adverse to investigating foreign things, and to introduce these things to men in his own city. Perhaps whatever is beautiful or beneficial one ought to make one's own, if one can do so without injustice. He is here speaking of a people, the Getae, a northern tribe on the border of Thrace and Scythia who would be considered barbarian by any conventional standard of the Greeks. Socrates, however, shows no reluctance to compare the beliefs of the Thracians with those of his own city.[54] According to the Thracians, they have received knowledge about a comprehensive health of body and soul from Zalmoxis, their wise king whom they acknowledge to be divine.

It is said of these Thracian doctors, presumably on the basis of their knowledge of such comprehensive health, that they are able even to immortalize people. Socrates does not say that this doctor claims this himself, but it is something the philosopher heard. Was this claim what drew him to investigate the Thracian wisdom? Needless to say, the promise of immortality is an attractive one for most men, although it is not clear whether this is because they love life so much or simply fear death. We do know that this philosopher says in his *Apology* that he has no reason to fear death, a thing of which he has no clear knowledge.[55] But, then, the philosopher has just suggested that he has a rather different understanding of life and death, and so he is perhaps attracted to an immortality of a different kind than that of the body. His mention of immortality here may be more for the benefit of Charmides.

The Thracian doctor told Socrates that the Greeks speak beautifully about a holistic approach to the healing of the body, but that they omit one "little thing:" they do not take

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[54]Foreigners, or foreign things, play an important part in the dialogue: Socrates comes from a foreign place, he sees men at the wrestling school, perhaps foreigners, whom he does not recognize, he is narrating this very conversation to a foreigner, and now we learn that the doctor from whom he says he learned the incantation is Thracian, thus the "incantation" which produces *sophrosyne* is foreign.

[55]See *Apology*, 42a.

into account the soul, and its relationship with the body, and being ignorant of the true "whole," the Greeks are thereby ignorant of the cause of many diseases. Thus the Thracian sets down certain analogies which he says is the teaching of Zalmoxis: that "as one must not attempt to doctor eyes without head or head without body, so also not body without soul" (156e). Strictly interpreted, these analogies only properly stand if one considers that just as the eyes are a part of the head, and the head a part of the body, so the body is a part of the soul. He would seem to be saying that the soul itself is "the whole" which must be in beautiful condition. When the whole is beautiful, only then is the part able to be in good condition. So if the head and the rest of the body are to be in beautiful condition as a whole, one must treat the soul also as a whole, for "everything starts from the soul, both bad and good things for the body and for the *entire human being*."[56]

The Thracian told Socrates, furthermore, that the soul is treated with certain incantations, which are beautiful speeches, and that by such speeches, moderation comes to be in souls.[57] Moderation is the foundation upon which it is easy to provide health both for the head and for the rest of the body, and thus one would presume for the eyes. The Thracian doctor's claim, however, is somewhat of a riddle, for it is puzzling how *logos* (rational speech) can introduce moderation into the irrational part of the soul.[58] Perhaps the emphasis should be on the beauty of the speeches. Perhaps the parts of the soul impervious to reason can be charmed by beauty.

Socrates does not elaborate, however; he says simply that having been taught both the drug and the incantations, he "swore an oath" that he would never use the drug unless the one to be healed first submitted his soul to be treated by Socrates with the incantations.

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[56]As a whole, then, the soul may also have parts. Socrates seems to be suggesting also that we must think of the "entire human being," the soul and the body together, as a whole. This is a problem which arises with respect to the virtue *sophrosyne*: understanding the soul and body together so as to comprehend the virtue in the way in which he later asks Charmides to comprehend it, "think over what sort of person *sophrosyne*, by being present, makes you, and what sort of thing it is that would produce someone like that, and reckoning all this together, say well and courageously what it appears to you to be" (160de).

[57]This is the first explicit mention of the virtue *sophrosyne* in the dialogue.

[58]It is akin to Critias' claim that *sophrosyne* is self-knowledge, that knowing oneself is also somehow moderation.

Socrates is not to succumb even should the rich, noble, or beautiful attempt to persuade him otherwise.[59] Socrates' oath, he says, makes it "necessary" for him to obey the Thracian, and he avows he will obey him no matter how persuasive another might be. The philosopher seems to take his promise very seriously, he will hold out against any and every form of persuasion, including presumably the threat of violence.[60]

If Charmides wishes the drug, then, he must submit his soul to a Thracian incantation. This would require that he accept a foreign medicine as better than that of his own Greek doctors. Only in this way can moderation come to be in his soul. If, however, Charmides is not willing to submit to these foreign ways, then, Socrates says, there is nothing he can do for the young man.

Critias interrupts.[61] Socrates has been speaking of treating the young man's soul, but Charmides' guardian observes, "Socrates, the illness of the head would be a godsend (*hermaion*) for the youth if he will be compelled because of his head to become better also in his thought (*dianoian*)" (157cd).[62] Critias thus speaks of the soul as if it were only mind or thought. He ignores a whole constellation of things which Socrates will raise later: desire, will, love, and fear (see 167d-168a). Having made his own wishes known with respect to a potential improvement in Charmides' mind, Critias then informs Socrates that his ward is also already distinguished for his moderation.[63] Critias thus adds another praise to his encomium

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[59]Charmides did not so much seek the drug without the incantation, as wish to administer the incantation to himself, to doctor himself. Is he ready?

[60]One's ability to keep oaths would seem to be connected to one's moderation as Socrates suggests here that one must often use self-control to hold out against temptations to break an oath. Critias will later suggest, however, that although "promise-keeping" is often confused by mere mortals as a sign of one's moderation, one actually would be "immoderate" to keep a promise which was not to one's own benefit.

[61]Socrates had suggested that as Charmides' guardian, Critias should be able to chaperone the philosopher's conversation with the young man. This is the first time Critias has interrupted.

[62]Critias says this will be a godsend, a *hermion*, after *Hermes* the god who not only was the god of wealth and good fortune, but also the patron of thieves. Becoming better in one's thought is only truly a godsend, it would seem, if the rest of one's soul is ruled by thought -- which would presumably depend on *sophrosyne*

[63]Actually, Critias has to have Socrates confirm that moderation is what the philosopher was speaking of.

of his ward. Indeed he himself would seem to have no moderation where this is concerned, and one wonders how hearing these kinds of praises must affect Charmides. While allowing that moderation is a function of age, Critias says that Charmides is "by far" the most moderate of those in his age cohort. Must not some of the credit for this accrue to his guardian?

Socrates congenially accepts the claim, adding that it's only just, given the young man's lineage.[64] He suggests that it is not easy to find families able to produce offspring more beautiful and better than Charmides. Thus Socrates turns to the young man's family background. It becomes apparent that the philosopher knows much about this background. He speaks first of the young man's paternal side of the family, reminding us by the mention of Critias' grandfather's name, that this is also Critias' family. This side of the family has been extolled by the poets as "distinguished in both beauty and virtue and in the rest of what is called happiness" (157e-158a).[65] Socrates suggests, then, that the paternal side of the family is happy for their beauty and virtue, but he leaves it a question as to what else may be the source of their happiness, or rather of what is *called* happiness. Perhaps he means to remind us that happiness, or what makes people happy varies from person to person.

The philosopher then speaks of Charmides' mother's side of the family. He says it is just the same, but he goes on to mention some distinctions. In particular, he mentions Charmides' uncle Pyrilampes, a political man who travelled to many foreign places, and even went as an ambassador to the Great King.[66] Pyrilampes was reputed to be superior to everyone on the continent in beauty and stature. Socrates thus does not mention either virtue or happiness with respect to this side of the family, but he does say that "this whole family is

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[64]This is the first time that justice itself is mentioned in the dialogue. It is mentioned twice more in connection with a knowledge of the just at 170b, and once more at 175b. Socrates' question about a knowledge of the just, then, is framed by two illustrations of his own knowledge of it.

[65]This is the only mention of "virtue, *arete*, in the dialogue. We note that Socrates makes no mention of Charmides' father himself whose place Critias has taken. Also, Solon, to whom Critias' family traces their ancestry, is mentioned as one of the poets who extolls the family for beauty and virtue. He and Critas, then, seem to share the habit of praising their own.

[66]We assume that Socrates means the King of Persia, but there is another Great King in the dialogue whom Socrates, in his own way, has travelled to see.

in no way inferior to the other" (158a). Charmides, as we saw earlier, has carried through both the beauty and stature of his maternal relations. We do not yet know, however, what he has carried through from his paternal forerunners. We do know that he has been under the particular guidance of one of the members of the "virtuous" side of the family. It is questionable, then, if Charmides' inherits anything but his physical looks from his mother's family.[67]

Thus, Socrates says, "in regard to your visible looks, by dear son of Glaucon, in my opinion you are not less than any of your forebearers" (158ab). The philosopher raises, however, some question as to Charmides' moderation. He is not willing, it seems, to take Critias word on the matter, and says that should Charmides' *nature* be sufficient in moderation and in the other things which Critias had stated, then Charmides was born blessed.[68] Part of Charmides' "nature," therefore, will include his moderation; perhaps, then, moderation is not foreign to nature, as we might think about something which is intended to control the appetites and desires. Rather moderation may be seen as a fulfillment of nature, or more precisely, of human nature.

The philosopher ends his eulogy to Charmides' forebearers, then, with reference to what becomes the central issue: the young man's moderation. Socrates suggests that he cannot himself judge this of Charmides, that Charmides must tell him if he is in need of the incantation, or if he is as moderate as Critias claims he is. If he is in need, Socrates says that he may chant the incantations of either Zalmoxis or of Abaris the Hyperborean. Socrates, then, has learned incantations from more than one foreign people.[69] If Charmides does have moderation, then, the philosopher says the drug should be given to him now. As Socrates is not satisfied with Critias' word, however, it is unlikely that he would be satisfied with that of

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[67]We should also note that Socrates says nothing about wisdom which he has indicated is an explicit concern of his with respect to the young.

[68]The other things which Critias had mentioned, aside from beauty, were poetry and philosophy. Socrates seems to be suggesting that Charmides would have to be born divine to have been born with such things in his nature.

[69]We know Abaris as a servant of the god Apollo who himself is the god of archery, prophecy, music, and healing and who was known for both his beauty and his virtue.

Charmides. Nonetheless the philosopher asks Charmides to "tell me yourself whether you agree with him or not and say that you already have a sufficient share of moderation, or that you are in need" (158c). Perhaps how he answers this query will itself provide evidence as to the truth.

This question ends an unusually long prologue and begins the explicit discussion of *sophrosyne*. The prologue began with Socrates just returning from Potidaea, and the battle which signals the end of peaceful relations between Athens and Sparta and the beginning of nearly three decades of war. He returns asking questions about "the news here" (153d). He is curious about the state of philosophy, and about the state of the youth, their beauty and their wisdom. Almost as if in response to his asking this question, the philosopher witnesses the erotic reactions of the men and the boys at the wrestling school to the "most beautiful" Charmides. He wonders in particular about the children. He asks to be shown Charmides, who is just coming into young manhood; the philosopher wishes to converse with him, and in particular to strip his soul. Critias then announces that Charmides is not altogether well, he has a certain "weakness" in the head. Thus, Critias proposes that Socrates act as a physician to the young man's sickness. Socrates does not object, but states that he cannot cure the youth unless he first introduces *sophrosyne* into his soul. Socrates is to act, therefore, as a physician to Charmides' soul, and not simply to his body, which may only manifest symptoms of a more profound illness. Critias denies that this is needed, but Socrates wishes to hear this from the youth himself. From such a beginning, then, which is marked with immoderation--war, lust, and disease--we enter into a lengthy and difficult investigation of the virtue of *sophrosyne*, moderation and self-knowledge.

3. THE CONVERSATION WITH CHARMIDES

When Socrates asks Charmides to deny or confirm what Critias has said, that Charmides is sufficiently moderate, the youth blushes, a beautiful answer perhaps to the philosopher's question. According to Socrates, furthermore, the young man's spoken answer is "not ignoble (*gennaion*)." Shame makes Charmides hesitate to say whether or not he is moderate, this being an "unreasonable" demand "under the present circumstances" (158c). It is unreasonable, the young man says, because to deny he is moderate is a strange (*atopon*) thing to say against oneself and gives the lie to Critias and others, but to affirm he is moderate is to boast (158cd). Charmides, thus, does not state what he himself believes; his speech attests only to his concern for the propriety of expressing himself in defiance of the conventional: he does not wish to say strange things, to act in opposition to his superiors, nor to call into question by boasting the others' opinion about his virtue. Socrates has placed Charmides in a difficult position; until he met the philosopher, the young man had relied upon the opinions of others. Charmides' blush thus underlines his words. Socrates asks Charmides twice if what Critias, his guardian, has said is true, and the young man blushes with embarrassment at being asked to reveal his own thoughts when higher authorities have been invoked. Charmides' *aidos* makes him blush.[70]

Charmides' blush makes him appear more beautiful to Socrates, for the philosopher says "a sense of shame suited his age" (158c).[71] Shame, then, is actually beautiful at this age (*helikia*) of great passion; it is a sign in the young that they are reprimanding and thus restraining their baser desires, whereas one would expect an older person to long since have moderated these desires.[72]

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[70]It may equally be, as Bruell contends, that Charmides blushes over his own high opinion that he is moderate, that Charmides all but admits his belief in his own moderation when he agrees to the procedural arrangements Socrates outlines for the investigation of it. But the important point, given Charmides' central definition, is that the young man blushes in shame at transgressing those things conventionally reputed to be respectable: speaking in deference to one's superiors and speaking modestly of oneself.

[71]The philosopher's idea of beauty seems to include a consideration of the fittingness of something.

[72]See Aristotle's discussion on shame, *Nichomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1985), 4.9,1128b,pp.114-115. This by no

As Charmides would prefer to remain silent on the question of his being moderate, the philosopher proposes a cooperative effort which appeals to both their goods, "you [Charmides] are not compelled to say what you don't wish to, and I do not turn to my doctoring without investigation" (158e). This is a kind of "common good," for even though both of these goods are peculiarly private, they are complementary; also, however, both are "goods" only insofar as they are "non-bads" (cf. 164ab.). Socrates is willing to leave off the investigation if the young man wishes, but Charmides, having now the philosopher's assurance that they will investigate only the *fact* of Charmides' moderation, and not his *belief* with respect to this fact, is eager to continue in any way which Socrates considers best. Charmides seems to trust that the philosopher has the youth's good in view.[73]

The explicit investigation of the virtue, then, is to begin with a young man's investigation into himself. In what might seem at first a suspect procedure, Socrates suggests that "it is clear that if moderation is present in you, you can offer some opinion about it (159a)," for it has not yet been established that "it is necessary" that moderation being in someone should "furnish some perception" of which one can have an opinion. It would seem possible for one to be moderate without knowing what moderation is. But perhaps once one is made aware of the question of whether moderation is in oneself, one would begin to have a "perception of this perception" (cf.167d). It does not appear to be the philosopher's *sole* concern at this point to discover what moderation is, but rather to show Charmides in a most effective way, through self-examination, that he is ignorant both of himself and of moderation. This may make the young man more willing to question the conventional opinions upon which he has heretofore relied.

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[72](cont'd) means settles any questions about shame: we see throughout the dialogue that shame can work in many ways, and that the problem may lie in educating one to feel shame before the proper things, and thus in discovering what those things are.

[73]We can see, then, how this investigation will work toward Charmides' positive good, if he is truly in *need* of moderation. One wonders, however, given Socrates' willingness to leave off the investigation, if it leads to the philosopher's own positive good. And if not, then why does he engage in it?

The philosopher in turn points out that Charmides' knowledge "of how to speak Greek" makes it possible for the young man to say what moderation appears to him to be (159a), and we are reminded that Charmides' opinion of "what and what sort of thing" moderation is may have mostly to do with the conventions of Greek culture, that his telling what moderation appears to him to be may only be a reflection of his particular time and place (i.e., what the word ordinarily means to native speakers ofthe language). Language, however, the common good by which we discuss these things, also makes it possible for us to examine our conventional opinions about them, and it is Socrates' "out of place" inquiries into the young man's answer which begin to break down these conventions.[74]

3.1 158c-160d Moderation as a Certain Quietness

Thus, according to Socrates' narration, Charmides hesitates, and somewhat against his own will, tells what moderation appears to him to be, "doing everything orderly (*kosmios*) and quietly (*hesyche*), not only while walking in the streets and conversing, but doing everything else in the same way."[75] Socrates then quotes the young man's very words, "And in my opinion, it is in sum a certain quietness that you are asking about" (159b). The philosopher points immediately to the conventionality of what Charmides has said. In fact, the young man has just described what seems to be characteristic of his own behaviour: he comes when called, sits obediently by Critias despite the many offers otherwise, and speaks in deference to his superiors (see 155b,155e,158cd). Indeed, it seems that it is by a certain "quietening" of children's behaviour that we normally discipline them to moderate their desires and passions, that when children are very young at least, quietening their behaviour is the first step in teaching them to control themselves. Thus Charmides is drawing upon his own experience. But Charmides' definition would seem to be, at most, only one facet of moderation, and wondering whether this definition is well said (*eu legeis*), Socrates asks his

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[74]We are also reminded, then, of the need for clarity in our thought and precision in our speech. cf.163d.

[75]As the Wests' note 25 points out, *hesyche* can mean quietly, gently, or slowly. It is this ambiguity in its meaning upon which Socrates will play.

first question, "Tell me, isn't moderation assuredly among the beautiful things" (159c)? Charmides answers most confidently that it is, and his definition founders on the fact that the young man has not distinguished the most beautiful "doings."[76]

Charmides has just offered Socrates a definition of moderation which the philosopher interprets as how the virtue might be manifested externally, how one, that is, would *do* everything. So Socrates begins with what he calls the "works of the body" (159c). He lists eight things in the following order: writing, reading, playing the cithara, wrestling, boxing, *pankration* (a kind of "no-holds-barred" wrestling), running, and jumping.[77] Beginning with writing, reading, and cithara-playing, the "musical" aspects of a child's education, the philosopher treats them as simply physical activities.[78] Because these things are generally understood to be works of the soul, it is strange to hear the philosopher casting them as works of the body, but he never-the-less asks, "which is *most* beautiful at the writing teacher's, to write similar letters swiftly or quietly" (159c)?[79] Socrates has identified slowness as the visible analogue of quietness and thus juxtaposes quietly and swiftly. "Loudly," the qualifier one might expect to be opposed to "quietly," has no relevance to the physical act of writing, and thus "slowly" is perhaps the best interpretation of *hesyche*. The young man does not object, and answers the philosopher's question, "Swiftly." Having established swiftness and slowness as the relevant opposition, Socrates then turns to reading, to which is most beautiful, reading swiftly or slowly. Here he explicitly replaces quietly by slowly, even though one could legitimately apply the opposite, loudly, to the activity of reading. Again, Charmides does not object and answers, "Swiftly."

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[76]Making such a distinction is important to Critias' later explanation of moderation as the doing of one's own things.

[77]He does not list walking in the streets and conversing, Charmides' own two examples and Socrates' special activities.

[78]They are "musical" as they are under the guidance of a Muse. Cf. *Republic* 376c-377c.

[79]It is most important to notice the philosopher's varied use of the superlative and comparative of *kalos*. Charmides is reputed to be the *most* beautiful and the *most* moderate of his contemporaries and the question arises here whether beauty and moderation are co-extensive. See Levine, p. 92.
It is also a question, however, as to how beauty is judged with respect to the body, the soul, and the mind, and Socrates' varied use of *kalos* is a clue in this regard.

It would seem that if one were to judge the mere physical acts of writing and reading, then Charmides' answer would be correct, for swiftness in the act would demonstrate a facility with its mechanical motion. But the perfection of this mechanical motion is not the purpose of these activities, and treating them as such ignores what truly matters: what we teach from what we write and what we learn from what we read. As Socrates will later point out, the writing teacher does not write and read his name only, nor teach the boys to do so, but rather teaches distinctions among names. Writing and reading similar letters quickly means that one is no longer concerned with the differences among these letters. To be concerned with these differences, to be concerned that is with the distinctions among names, requires careful, and thus slow work. Socrates makes an implicit criticism of Charmides' teachers who have taught him that swift writing and reading is most beautiful.

But, it would seem also, that Socrates' own explicit emphasis on swiftness lures the young man into answering swiftly, and thus carelessly. Having asked the first question, that is, whether it is most beautiful to write and read swiftly or slowly, the philosopher reminds Charmides of the conventional opinions on these things, and thus encourages him to abide by these opinions. The result, however, is that Charmides refutes his own definition, and if this is not a lesson for the young man, it should be for the reader.

The philosopher then moves to his third example where he conjoins what seem to be two very distinct things: cithara playing, a musical activity, and wrestling, a gymnastic activity. He asks, "are playing the cithara swiftly and wrestling keenly much *more* beautiful than doing so quietly (159c)?"[10] Despite the fact that a contrast, a musical activity with a gymnastic one, is most sharply drawn here, Charmides does not pause to investigate. He answers affirmatively to the question, and when the philosopher asks if it isn't "the same" with respect to boxing and the *pankration*, Charmides says that it is.[11] Charmides, however,

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[10]In this case, we see that Socrates uses the comparative of *kalos* to describe these kinds of activities.

[11]Charmides, although he must participate in these sports, has not reflected very long on their differences, that each one may in fact require different qualities: wrestling, for instance, would seem to require a kind of strength and endurance; boxing, a quickness and boldness.

again seems to be delimiting the actual physical or perceptible motions of an activity as the proper way to conceive of the entire activity itself. This is exemplified by his characterization of cithera-playing as more beautifully done swiftly. The actual physical ease with which a musician plays an instrument, however, is only considered as a part of our judgement of their ability to play beautifully. Swift playing would be more beautiful, that is, when it was appropriate to play swiftly. At other times, it may be more beautiful to play slowly or even quietly.

In the swiftness of his reply, Charmides also ignores the fact that we are no longer dealing with a single opposition, that the philosopher has seen fit to introduce another qualifier, keenly (*oxeos*). In the Greek, as in English, keenness means sharpness with respect to objects, and quickness or crispness with respect to physical motion, but also can mean a kind of intense desire or ardent enthusiasm with respect to the soul. As Socrates has established the qualifiers "swiftly" and "slowly" to describe the actual motion of the body, the use of *oxeos* to describe physical motion might seem redundant. As we see later, however, the philosopher identifies *oxeos* as a quality of soul (160a). There seems to be, in any case, a general difficulty with defining terms having to do with invisible things such as the soul. Because so many of the terms which we use to describe such invisible things actually originate in the perceptual realm, they can then apply both to the visible and the invisible; as we have seen, keenness applies not only to objects and physical motion, but also to something in the soul. This causes a problem, however, when we try to describe things of the soul which cannot be properly understood simply by recourse to the physical realm. Charmides' own confusion of the normal perceptible consequences of *sophrosyne* with the thing itself is mirrored in this problem with the descriptive terms: he is trying to describe from its perceptible consequences what *sophrosyne* in the soul may be. But, to say that playing the cithera swiftly or wrestling keenly is more beautiful, and therefore more moderate is to misunderstand what might be a physical manifestation of having *sophrosyne* in one's soul with *sophrosyne* itself.[32]

[32]This would apply, then, also to beauty; that judging what is more or less beautiful with respect to the body has to be distinguished from judging what is

The philosopher concludes their consideration of works of the body by saying, "And running and jumping and all the works of the body -- aren't those beautiful that are done keenly and swiftly, and those ugly that are done slowly, with difficulty, and quietly" (159cd).[13] Socrates chooses, however, two works, running and jumping, to which swiftness and keenness are most obviously applied. Charmides, against his own definition, agrees with the philosopher's conclusion, perhaps encouraged by Socrates' suggestion that slowness reflects difficulty, as it often does, and swiftness, an ease or facility for the activity.

Charmides, however, does not see that there are other works of the body which would be better done slowly or quietly. As compared to running, for instance, Charmides' own example, walking, would seem to be defined by its slowness. What of eating and drinking, particularly with respect to moderation, are they not done more beautifully slowly and quietly? And what of that work of the body most germane to moderation, lovemaking? How is it more beautifully done? Is it more beautifully done slowly or quickly?[14]

Thus Socrates asks the young man to affirm that at least with regard to the body, a qualification the philosopher states twice, what we see as most beautiful is what is swiftest and keenest. When Charmides agrees confidently to this, Socrates states as a question the premise that moderation is something beautiful. Receiving the young man's assurance that it is, the philosopher further restricts their conclusion: stating for the third time the premise that moderation is something beautiful, he says that with regard to the body, only swiftness is more moderate.[15]

So it is that we turn to the "things of the soul" (160b). The discussion is prefaced by the question whether learning well is more beautiful than learning poorly. Learning well thus

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[12](cont'd) beautiful with respect to the soul. As we will see, Charmides' own physical beauty is not representative of the state of his soul.

[13]Here, *kalos* does not appear in its superlative or comparative form, but rather in opposition to *aischrus*, "shameful or ugly." This is a strange move on the philosopher's part as previously he was judging the beauty of the works of the body on a continuum of swiftness and keenness: the swiftest and keenest, the most beautiful; the slowest and quietest, the least beautiful. How is it that we judge a work of the body as ugly or shameful instead of less beautiful or less noble? Is ugliness simply the absence of beauty, or is it something positive itself?

[14]Apparently people, especially men and women, disagree.

[15]It would seem paradoxical to call anything about the body "sensible" or moderate.

becomes the standard by which we judge the other activities of the soul."[16] Socrates suggests by this that there is one work of the soul by which we can judge the other works as more or less beautiful. One should note, at the outset, however, that the things of the soul which Socrates later discusses with Critias, the desires and the passions, are explicitly ignored in this discussion.

Learning well, Charmides says, means learning swiftly as opposed to quietly and slowly. Unlike running, however, the activity of learning would not seem to be so easily qualified. It would seem, that is, that certain things are learned more beautifully, swiftly, and others more beautifully, slowly. If we think, for instance, of the learning of numbers, mathematical operations, logic, or language, learning swiftly demonstrates a certain intelligence and thus ease with respect to the subject. It would not be correct, however, to apply this same standard to the learning of something like the virtue moderation. Rather, it seems to require alternatively a training of the spirit and the passions which is necessarily slow given the nature of these things. Indeed, the learning of anything like the virtues which involves the entire soul, as opposed to only the mind, must be done slowly or not at all.

Socrates then moves, logically, to teaching, the other side of learning. Introducing yet another qualifier, the philosopher asks, "isn't it more beautiful to teach someone swiftly and vigorously rather than quietly and slowly" (159e)? The young man characteristically answers, "swiftly and vigorously," but we as readers are witnessing how such swift and vigorous teaching does not seem to be conducive to Charmides' learning. The swift and vigorous teachers, however, are often the most attractive ones, and therefore, often the most successful in inspiring students to learn. On the other hand, swiftness and vigor in teaching frequently promotes a kind of facile approach to learning which might preclude a careful, and thus slow examination of what is being studied. However, swiftness and vigor in the other two activities which Socrates names, recollecting and remembering, would seem to evidence a kind of keen attention to a subject which lends itself both to the retention of what one has learned and to making the necessary connections between ideas which aid in recollection.

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[16]It is notable that learning poorly is still beautiful, or at least more beautiful than not learning at all.

Having heard the young man's answers to the last questions, then, Socrates asks him a specific question about the soul. He says, "Isn't readiness of mind a certain keenness, not quietness, of the soul" (160a)? Socrates thus notes a distinction which might help explain some of the difficulty with merely accepting swiftness as the unambiguos answer to his last questions. In many instances, that is, where we could say that the activity involved the mind alone, learning numbers and recollection for example, we would say that doing these things swiftly as opposed to slowly would be to do them more beautifully. But in those things which involve the entire soul, learning or teaching the virtues in particular, doing so slowly would be more beautiful given the fact that time is needed for any training to have an enduring effect upon the soul.

Socrates' question, then, should bring us to a consideration of the difference between what learning is with respect to the mind alone and what it is with respect to the entire soul. Thus while comprehending what is said at the writing teachers, citharists, and everywhere else, may be more beautifully done swiftly, the soul's inquiries and taking counsel are more beautifully done slowly and quietly. It may be, furthermore, that given the connection between the mind and the passions and desires, a certain "quietness" in the soul with regard to the passions and desires would make the mind more able to do more beautiful work.

At this point, however, Charmides still relies upon the conventional opinion of moderation which he tried to express by pointing to a certain quietness of one's ***behaviour***. Socrates has shown him that one cannot make sense of this at the level of the body; he now has him admit that at the level of the soul, in its inquiries and taking counsel, the one who does this most easily and most swiftly, "is reputed to be worthy of praise." Using Charmides' own standard, then, Socrates has the young man refute his own defintion, saying now that both with respect to the soul and with respect to the body, those things "done swiftly and keenly ***appear*** more beautiful to us than those done slowly and quietly (160ab)." That Charmides is not altogether happy with this conclusion is manifested in his very tentative agreement; he will have to re-think the argument. So perhaps for Charmides' sake, Socrates now makes a summation of the argument. He says that since moderation must be beautiful,

and nowhere, or at least in very few places, did the "quiet actions *appear* more beautiful to us than the swift and fierce (*ischurai*) ones," that we cannot conclude, from this argument, that moderation is a certain quietness or that the moderate life is the quiet one.[10] As Socrates goes on to explain, moderation would not be *acting* quietly, even if no fewer quiet actions were more beautiful than vigorous and swift ones (160bc). Socrates is reiterating, then, that one cannot equate *sophrosyne* with its consequences at the perceptible level. This is to confuse the quality of the action itself with what rules the action. Thus he introduces the other qualifier which Charmides had used, but which the philosopher had dropped from the argument proper, saying, "nor would the quiet life, an orderly one, be more moderate than the one that is not quiet, because it was laid down in our argument that moderation is one of the beautiful things, and swift things have appeared no less beautiful than quiet ones" (160d). Socrates had omitted any discussion of orderliness (*kosmios*) because the condition that one *do* things "quietly" acts upon "orderliness" as a restrictive qualifier.[11] If we understand the orderly life as the quiet one, then, we cannot say that such a life is more moderate. This would be to confuse what is only sometimes beautiful with respect to the body with what is truly beautiful with respect to the soul.

Charmides has been shown, then, that moderation cannot be understood at the level of the body, that what appears at the level of the body is only a superficial manifestation of a more profound phenomenon. Thus the philosopher encourages the young man to make an inquiry into his own soul and take counsel, "Apply your mind more," he advises Charmides, "and look into yourself" (160d). He is suggesting that Charmides forgo the conventional opinions as they have been shown to have been poorly said, and to try again his own self-examination: first to see what sort of person moderation has made him, and then to search out what it is that would produce a person like this. Having done this, Charmides must "reckon all this together;" he must, that is, look at the *whole* and then say what moderation appears to him to be (160de).

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[10]The only other time *ischurai* is used is as a description for the battle at Potidaea. Cf. 153c.

[11]See Benardete, p. 20.

3.2 160d-161b Moderation as *Aidos*

Socrates has requested a hard thing from a young man who has shown himself to be, as most people are, more willing to rely upon what others say, so Socrates rallies him to "say well and courageously."[89] The young man must pause to think; his "saying well" thus entails a slowness and quietness of inquiry which he had previously ranked as inferior to swiftness. Then Charmides offers what is his central definition of moderation, the product of his self-examination, "Then in my opinion moderation makes a human being have a sense of shame and be ashamed and moderation is just what respectfulness (*aidos*) is" (160e). *Aidos* means a "reverence, awe, and so a proper sense of shame before that which is conventionally reputed to be respectable or sacred."[90] Charmides' second answer would seem to describe the state of the soul with respect to moderation. Socrates, however, does not congratulate his young interlocuter on the product of his courageous investigation, perhaps because Charmides is still relying on conventional opinion. Shame is the usual tool by which we moderate the appetites and passions. As noted before, what might seem surprising in this dialogue on moderation, is that an explicit consideration of moderation as the control of the appetites and passions does not take place, but it would seem to be implied in each one of Charmides' definitions, and particularly here with respect to shame. As much as Charmides' first definition suggests the education of moderation through the external control of a child's behaviour, his second definition points to the extension of this education through the control of one's internal motions.

In Charmides' estimation moderation as respectfulness is what makes a human being *have* a sense of shame and *be* ashamed. He thus indicates how shame rules himself, and how most people are educated into having a proper awe toward those things which are respected or sacred in the city. One can be educated, however, to have a sense of shame before different things. As we see later, Critias feels shame at being caught at a loss in front of those with whom he enjoys a certain reputation. Thus it is Critias' love of honor which brings on a sense

[89]Here and in Socrates' next observation are the only times courage (*andreios*) appears in the dialogue. Charmides requires courage, it seems, to forgo the conventional opinions, and to search through himself for the answers.
[90]See Wests' note 29.

of shame, and his sense of shame which makes him attempt to hide his perplexity (see 169d). Socrates will point out to Charmides, through his investigation of the young man's definition, that the respectfulness or sense of shame which one might be educated to have toward certain things does not always attend to one's own good.

To begin his investigation of Charmides' central definition, Socrates reminds Charmides of something which the young man had said, "weren't you just agreeing that moderation is something beautiful" (160e)?[91] It is strange, that is, that if moderation is *aidos* or a sense of shame, that it is generally beautiful, for shame would seem to be beautiful only at a certain age (cf 158c). But when Charmides accepts that he had agreed to the premise Socrates stated, the philosopher then asks him if the moderate are also good men (*agathoi andres*) Charmides answers yes, but further agrees that what produces men who are not good would not be a good (160e).[92] This would seem to be a questionable assumption, that something would not be a good which did not produce something which is good. One need only consider something like food or drink which both are necessary for life, and thus ordinarily regarded as good, but which both can in fact produce something which is not good: gluttony and drunkenness. On the assumption, however, that something which is good would not produce those who are not good, and that moderation must be both beautiful and good, Socrates presents the poet Homer as an authority, asking "Don't you trust (*pisteueis*) that Homer speaks beautifully when he says, "Respectfulness [*aidos*] is not good for a needy man" (161a)?"[93]

"Homer's" speech would seem to make sense even on the surface: for those in need, like the indigent or the sick, respectfulness itself is not a good if it stands in the way of

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[91]As David Levine points out, this premise is stated no less than five times in the discussion concerning moderation as quietness. Cf. 159c, 159d(2), 160b, 160d. This is the sixth time it is mentioned by Socrates, and it is noted one more time at 160e in conjunction with the good. For Levine's more detailed discussion of this see his "Plato's *Charmides*: On the Political and Philosophical Significance of Ignorance" (Ph.D. dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 1975), pp. 96-102.

[92]This would still leave open the question as to whether that which produces men who are not good might nonetheless be beautiful.

[93]As the Wests note, the line in question comes from the *Odyssey* XVII, 347.

treating their need."[92] This would seem to be simply obvious. In the context in which the line in question arises in the *Odyssey*, however, this would seem to be borne out on an even more profound level. Odysseus, to whom Socrates often likens himself, has returned home after a twenty year absence to find his wife, son, and few devoted servants under seige by the many suitors desiring his wife's hand in marriage. He has disguised himself as a beggar, so as to deceive the suitors of his presence, but the noble man's *aidos* makes him rebel against whole-heartedly playing his part. In the line quoted, Telemachus, his son, is advising him to go among the suitors as would a needy man asking for food. Telemachus, a young man, displays a certain amount of astuteness in recognizing that in this situation, respectfulness is not a good. As Socrates will say, "respectfulness, it seems, is a non-good and a good" (161a). As Bruell points out, however, Odysseus has disguised his true need with a false one.[93] Gone these many years, this kingly man has arrived in Ithaca to take back what is his own, his wife, child, and household. He knows that the many suitors for his wife's hand will stand in battle to prevent this. Thus, in preparation for the upcoming battle, he goes disguised among the suitors, to test, as the goddess Athena advises, who are the "decent lads and who the vicious." Odysseus' need, then, is greater than his beggarly disguise suggests, and it is because *aidos* does not treat *this* need, taking back what is truly one's own, that it is not a good.

Charmides, however, has not made such distinctions. His respectfulness or sense of shame is the product of an education which has encouraged a blind obedience to those things conventionally reputed to be worthy of respect. This expectation of obedience relies upon the assumption that these things are good, and thus respect toward them is good. As much as we use shame, however, to teach children respect, and in the process, to teach them to control themselves, this kind of education, because it requires of children an unthinking acceptance of certain opinions about what is good and what is bad, is vulnerable to attacks on these opinions. Socrates has just shown Charmides that there may be a disjunction between one's

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[92]The line is actually uttered by Telemachus, a young man, thus it is not necessarily what Homer himself "said," but rather what he put into the mouth of one of his characters.
[93]Bruell, p. 155.

own good and what one has been taught is good. *Aidos*, then, is not intrinsically a good.

Ironically, however, the philosopher has played on Charmides' *aidos* toward Homer to have the youth agree that *aidos* is not a good. Shame, it appears, is a powerful thing. Because of his *aidos*, Charmides has just dismissed his own definition on very questionable grounds. His reverence for Homer makes him accept without further thought the line which Socrates quoted as being a refutation of moderation as respectfulness. He does not dare, that is, to investigate the truth of the line itself whereby he might learn that his own assumption that something which is good would not produce that which is not good is highly questionable. Through Charmides, Socrates demonstrates how shame can in fact impede one's learning, and if truth is to be understood as good, and good for oneself, we see in Charmides how shame can work against one's own good.

Socrates states, then, that moderation cannot be respectfulness as respectfulness has been shown to be "something no more good than bad (161ab)." But the philosopher qualifies this conclusion by making it conditional on the assertion that moderation is "the good." The question remains, that is, how we are to understand the good of which the philosopher speaks. Is Odysseus, by "doing his own things," a good man? Is he doing what is good simply or simply doing what is good for himself? With these questions in mind, we turn to Charmides' third definition.

3.3 161b-162b Moderation as the Doing of One's Own Things

Charmides now seems eager to test what he "once heard someone say, that doing one's own things is moderation" (161b).[96] Socrates guesses that the someone from whom young Charmides heard this definition was his older cousin and guardian, Critias.[97] If the

[96]As Wests point out, "doing one's own (things)," literally translates *to ta heautou prattein*. It is also often translated as "minding one's own business," or "not being meddlesome." It is the well-known defintion of justice in the *Republic*, 443.
[97]Socrates calls Charmides a "wretch" for repeating this definition. It is a harsh address which the philosopher uses but once again when Critias announces that the only knowledge which makes man happy is knowledge of good and evil. Bruell suggests that if we understand both of these teachings as somehow Socratic, then perhaps one can be called a wretch for repeating out of context what appears to be a Socratic teaching, p. 155. When he calls Critias a wretch, however, Socrates

philosopher's suspicion is correct, it would indicate that Charmides now is willing to put some of his guardian's teachings up to question, demonstrating a certain lack of complete reverence or awe towards Critias."[9] Critias flatly denies, however, that Charmides heard this definition from him; a denial which is strongly belied by his later actions and which leaves his young ward in the difficult position of having to defend something which he does not really understand, and which is thus not his own. Why Critias is reluctant to take responsibility for this definition is somewhat of a mystery, particularly since he soon proves anxious to enter the discussion. It may be simply that his honor has not been impugned at this point, so that he does not care to join the investigation, or it may be that Critias has something to hide.

At any rate, Charmides asks why it should matter from whom he heard this definition, an ironic question from one who has just "trusted" in Homer. It would seem, that is, that it does "make a difference" from whom we hear things, that it is on the basis of how much we trust their authority, their "sensibleness," that we are willing even to listen to what others have to say. Socrates himself is most willing to accept the definition as a riddle, and not as something foolish, on the assumption that it was someone wise who said it. This is one of the ways by which we may judge the sufficiency of our own knowledge, by how we stand on the subject in relation to the "wise." Socrates, however, swears by Zeus that only the truth of what is said, and not who said it, should be investigated, and the philosopher may finally be correct about this, for if one is to be self-sufficient in wisdom, then how one stands to the truth would seem to be the ultimate test.

Assuming that the definition, doing one's own things, is a riddle, Socrates begins by first securing Charmides' agreement on what might seem self-evident: that the writing teacher *does something* when he writes or reads. The philosopher then inquires, "So in your opinion does the writing teacher write and read only his own name and teach you boys to do so, or did you write your enemies' no less than your own and your friends' names" (161d)? The

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[9](cont'd) also accuses Critias of having dragged him around in a circle, and of concealing what he really thought. Is Charmides' third definition somehow the beginning of this circle?

[9]Thus, Charmides later laughs slightly when looking to his guardian, a kind of recognition of his lack of *aidos*.

question seems to point to an immediate difficulty with understanding what the speaker may have meant by "one's own things." We see that one's name, which would seem to be wholly and unquestionably one's own, is primarily for the benefit of others. One's name, that is, immediately makes one another's business, and furthermore, in this account, one becomes identifiable as a friend or an enemy. One cannot, then, simply understand one's own things as those denominated by one's name. This points to the political nature of names themselves, and to why the investigation takes the turn it does to political questions."[11]

Charmides does not consider himself to be meddlesome by writing or reading other's names even though, as Socrates reminds him, he is not doing his *very* own things. But Socrates again raises the question of whether writing and reading are doing something. It may be, in fact, that reading and writing are not what we wish to mean by "doing something," at least not in the same sense with which we speak of the deeds of the arts which Socrates now introduces, "And further, *comrade*," he says, "doctoring and housebuilding and weaving and producing by any art at all any of the works of an art--surely these are 'doing something'" (161e, my emphasis). Although the reading and writing of names may be inherently political, the other arts could conceivably be done alone as one's own: doctoring oneself, building one's own house, weaving one's own cloak. Socrates asks if a city would be well managed if with respect to these things, and others which seem alike, a *law* bid each one "that he not touch the things of another, but that each produce and do his own things (162a).

Such a law itself, however, immediately suggests a strange of paradox with respect to this view: at least one person at one time, the law-giver (*nomothetes*) had to mind more than his own business. The law-giver's business, that is, would seem to extend to everyone and to all arts which would suggest either that the law-giver himself is not moderate or that we must understand the doing of one's own things in some other way.

One can see, furthermore, that important distinctions may by made among the arts which Socrates lists: doctoring, housebuilding, weaving and washing one's own cloak,

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[11]As Levine points out, the learning of names suggests that we do not confine ourselves simply to learning what is ours. His discussion on this point is most helpful. See pp. 125-129.

cobbling, and the (producing or using of) oil flask and scraper. Certain of the arts, such as doctoring, have to do directly with the body itself. Other arts, housebuilding, weaving, and cobbling, have to do with the making of the possessions of the body, and still others, with the washing and maintenance of such things.[100] Are we to regard all of these arts in the same way? Or are the arts having to do strictly with the body more properly understood as having to do do with one's own things, as opposed to the arts which simply have to do with the possessions of the body?[101]

The doing of one's own things cannot be simply or easily understood with respect to these several different arts. The investigation of moderation, then, cannot afford to overlook the nature of the arts themselves, if it is to explain what moderation would mean in the city. Charmides himself does not think that a city would be well-managed which requires that each do all of the arts as one's own thing. Thus Socrates asks him if a city which is managed well would be managed moderately. The young man replies, "How not" (162a)? Charmides does not see the complications associated with such a question. We have seen in the investigation of Charmides' first definition that it is necessary to understand modereation at the level of the soul, that it is not possible to comprehend moderation itself pointing to apparently "moderate" actions. Now with the definition of moderation as the doing of one's own things, Socrates raises the question of whether it is possible to comprehend this same virtue at the level of the city, whether one can say of a city that it is moderately managed, presuming one means by this that the virtue can be detected in the constitution of the city itself.

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[100]It is unclear what Socrates means by the addition of oil flask and scraper. These things were used in bathing by the Greeks, so the question may be whether one should claim this kind of "care" of one's own body as doing one's own things. Having another wash one's body, that is, is not the same as having them wash one's cloak.

[101]Conspicuous by its absence in this regard is farming or the "provision of food for existing and living," the first art to enter the city in the *Republic*. The provision of food for oneself and one's own is the basic necessity of life. How this is accomplished, farming, fishing, hunting, gathering, and whether it is done by oneself or by others, would seem to be fundamental political questions. The art of farming, furthermore, epitomizes one of the reasons why Socrates calls for a rational division of labour as the definition of "doing one's own things:" that a thing done must be done according to nature and at the crucial moment (see *Republic* 369d-370c). Farming would seem to be replaced in this context by doctoring.

In the *Republic*, where the analogy of city to soul is attempted, we see that moderation in the city is understood as a relationship among the parts of the city which reflects the kind of harmony one would expect to find in the soul of a moderate human being. It is, according to Socrates, a unanimity of opinion among the parts as to who must rule in the city and in each one.[102] The analogy of city to soul, however, does not entirely hold. While it is conceivable that *individuals* may have a unanimity of opinion among themselves as to who should rule, it is not conceivable, given the irrational nature of certain parts of the soul, that the same should be true for it. The kind of harmony which would come to be in the city from a unanimity of opinion among the parts of the city, could only come to be in the soul by the imposition of one part's rule over the others. Thus, in this sense, with respect to what is within, moderation would seem to be closer to what Socrates describes in the *Republic* as justice in the soul, a kind of imposed harmony of the parts.[103] "Doing one's own things," which Charmides claims here as moderation, is, of course, the well-known definition of justice in the city in the *Republic*.

Socrates' present formulation of this definition, however, is not the same one he sets down in the *Republic*: each doing what is best suited to his nature. We are asked rather to understand moderation, doing one's own things, as a kind of apolitical self-sufficiency which is conceivable at least insofar as one individual is able to handle all of the material arts necessary for his survival. This particular formulation of the definition, however, is rejected by Charmides and Socrates on the basis of *political* considerations, and in the name of a virtue of the city as a whole. If we accept what Socrates' example of the reading and writing of names seems to teach, that our use of names (and all speech) is inherently a political act

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[102]All of the following references to the *Republic* are found between 442c and 444a.

[103]Socrates says there exactly, "And in truth justice was, as it seems, something of this sort; however, not with respect to a man's minding his external business, but with repect to what is within, with respect to what truly concerns him and his own. He doesn't let each part in him mind other people's business or the three classes in the soul meddle with each other, but really sets his own house in good order and rules himself; he arranges himself, becomes his own friend, and harmonizes the three parts, exactly like three notes in a harmonic scale, lowest, highest and middle. And if there are some other parts in between, he binds them together and becomes entirely one from many, moderate and harmonized" (443c 443e).

of which this definition of moderation must somehow take account, and if we accept, as he says, that this reading and writing is really "doing something," that it is truly an activity of the human soul, then we cannot understand moderation in the individual soul in isolation from that soul's relationship to others. Thus, one must be able to recognize what one's own things truly are, which may in part be politically determined (e.g. "property rights"). And, if this is moderation, then what is beautiful and good in the individual is involved with what is beautiful and good for the city.

Socrates has exposed what seem to be incorrigible problems with the definition as interpreted in its most literal formulation. He suggests that one who could hold such a "simple" view of moderation must be foolish. When Charmides assures the philosopher that the one who said moderation is the doing of one's own things was at least "reputed" to be wise, then Socrates says that in his opinion this definition must be a riddle. The philosopher is willing, then, to accept a reputation for wisdom as reason enough to stay our dismissing the definition out of hand. The philosopher thinks he sees what the crux of the riddle is: "that it is hard to recognize whatever doing one's own things is" (162b). We are not able, that is, to recognize *simply* our own things; in even the seemingly simple cases, Socrates has pointed out perplexing complications.

He asks the young man, then, if *he* knows what the one who uttered this riddle may have meant. Charmides both swears and confesses his ignorance. It would appear that Socrates' beautiful speeches have had the effect of introducing a certain amount of immoderation into Charmides' soul. We have seen in this regard, that the philosopher has shown the young man that the three definitions of moderation which Charmides has put forward do not adequately explain the virtue. The three definitions seem to follow, however, a certain progression in the education of moderation in the young: first quietening their external motions so as to encourage them to learn to control themselves, then using shame to admonish their baser impulses, and finally to teach them to mind only what is properly their own business, and thus to not compulsively meddle in other people's affairs. Charmides, then, has run the gamut of his own experience of moderation. The philosopher's arguments

suggest that both quietness and *aidos* are only moderation insofar as they introduce a certain amount of self-control into one's soul by which one is able to function within the political association. The real crux of the problem now seems to be how one must understand "one's own things" so as to be able to *know* for oneself that one's soul is truly "beautiful and good," and thus that one is truly moderate. Charmides cannot answer to this. As Socrates will soon observe, one cannot expect one so young to know such things. Charmides, the younger man, then, properly looks to Critias, the older man who has been his teacher and from whom he had heard that doing one's own things is moderation. Insofar as Charmides is a product of his guardian's nurture, the investigation of moderation with Critias will continue the stripping of Charmides' soul.

4. THE CONVERSATION WITH CHARMIDES' TEACHER

Critias, the lover of honor (*philotimos*), enters this conversation on moderation, angry, "just as a poet is with an actor who recites his poems badly" (162d). It seems that whatever Charmides and others might think of his poetic ability (cf. 155a), it is Critias whom we are to regard as the poet, and Charmides but the balky and uncomprehending rhetor of his guardian's poems. Having examined the young man, the philosopher has diagnosed that Charmides is importantly the product of his guardian's nurture. Recall, Socrates suspected from the beginning that Charmides heard the present definition of moderation from Critias, who then flatly denied that this is so, but who now manifests an author's fierce love for this particular definition.[104] Socrates also observes that Critias had for some time "been anxious to contend and win honor" before Charmides and the others present, only restraining himself with great difficulty. It seems that he lacks some of that moderation which he so prizes in his ward.[105]

Although earlier Critias had boasted about his young cousin's philosophic abilities (155a), now he reprimands Charmides for the young man's apparent ineptness in defending a defensible view. Socrates, however, absolves Charmides, saying, "it's no wonder that he at his age is ignorant." Critias, on the other hand, has no such excuse: he is older and has "taken care" to study such questions. Time and care, therefore, are necessary for profitable investigation of things of this kind; a rational understanding of moderation, if not moderation itself, may only come with age, especially if it requires knowledge of what one's own things truly are. Critias, because of his age, has had more time than his ward to devote to this investigation; and given his pedagogic responsibilities, more reason for doing so. Consequently, Socrates says he would be much more pleased to investigate the definition with Critias than with Charmides. He asks that Critias now take the argument as his own.[106]

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[104]Cf. *Republic*, 330c.

[105]Contrasting Critias' lack of self-control to Socrates' own restraint at 155d, we see the difference between the philosopher, a man whose actions are guided by his reason, and Critias, a divided man whose actions are sometimes guided by reason, and sometimes by passion. We should not forget, also, the men in the Palaestra whose actions, as Socrates describes them, seem guided by their bodily desires.

[106]Of course, if Critias has heard the definition in another context from Socrates,

We enter, then, a new discussion of the definition, one in which Critias attempts to defend his view with some novel distinctions and the sophistical interpretation of a traditional authority. The original definition, the doing (*prattein*) of one's own things, is apparently not as sophisticated as Critias would like, and Socrates provides him an opening by asking, "Now tell me, do you also concede what I was just now asking, that all craftsmen *make* (*poein*) something" (162e).[107] Catching sight of this opening, Critias willingly concedes that this is so, and that they can make not only their own things but also the things of others, yet this in itself doesn't "prevent" their being moderate. Thereupon Socrates points out that one who holds the view that moderation is the doing (*prattein*) of one's own things must reconcile this view with the assertion that those who do (*prattein*) the things of others are nonetheless moderate.

To defend his position, Critias first sets down his distinction between making (*poein*) and doing (*prattein*) or working (*ergazesthai*) and, then relying on the great poet Hesiod as his authority, cites the line from *Works and Days*, "Work is no disgrace." [108] One suspects, however, that the distinction which Critias makes between making and doing/working is one which he has heard before used by Socrates, although the philosopher ironically accuses the sophist Prodicus as the source of such sophistication. Xenophon tells us that Socrates' accusers "alleged that he selected from the most famous poets the basest (*ponerata*) passages, and used them as evidence in teaching his companions to be tyrants and malefactors." [109] His accusers contended that Socrates interpreted this particular line as recommending that no work is disgraceful which is for one's benefit. The line in question, and the context in which it arises in Hesiod's *Works and Days*, lends itself to this interpretation. As Hesiod teaches:

It is from work that men grow rich and own flocks

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[106](cont'd) the philosopher may be wishing to "take back his own."
[107]He actually had asked if they *do* something; Cf. 161e.
Socrates suggests in fact that Critias himself is a craftsman in the expression which the Wests translate as "Beautifully done, but which literally means "You make beautifully."
[108]Hesiod, *Works and Days*, trans. Richmond Lattimore, "*Works and Days*," "*Theogony*," "*The Shield of Heracles*." (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1959), 311.
[109]Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, I ii 56.

and herds;
by work, too, they become much better friends
of the immortals.
(and to men too, for they hate the people
who do not labor.)
Work is no disgrace; the disgrace is in not working;
and if you do work, the lazy man will soon begin
to be envious
as you grow rich, for with riches go nobility
and honor. [110]

Xenophon, however, maintains that in Socrates' interpretation of Hesiod's line "Work is no disgrace," the philosopher distinguishes "work" which is the making of good (*agathon*) things from "idling," which is gambling, other base pursuits, and the making of those things which cause loss or penalty. As such, work is a benefit (*ophelios*) and a good for man, while idling is harmful (*blaberon*) and an evil (*kakon*). Thus work, a true benefit to man, can never be disgraceful.[111]

Critias proceeds, then, to employ what might seem to be the philosopher's own interpretation, referring to "doing/working" as a certain kind of making. Critias' own move in the argument, however, is more awkward and less plausible. He says specifically:

> So do you suppose, if he [Hesiod] was calling such works as you were just now speaking of both working and doing, that he would say that it wasn't a disgrace for someone to be a shoemaker or salt-fish seller or prostitute? One ought not to suppose so, Socrates; but he too, I suppose, held that making is something other than doing and working, and that although a thing made sometimes becomes a disgrace -- whenever it doesn't come into being with that which is beautiful -- a work is never a disgrace at all. For things made beautifully and beneficially he called works, and such makings he called workings and doings. One ought to say that he believed that only such as these are kindred to oneself, while everything harmful is alien. Therefore one ought to suppose that Hesiod and anyone else who is prudent call the one who does his own things moderate (163bd).

Whereas Socrates, according to Xenophon, was primarily contrasting "working" with "idling," Critias first makes "doing" synonomous with "working." Critias next subsumes doing/working under the class of makings, being that subset of makings which are beautiful and beneficial.[112]

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[110]Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 308-314.
[111]Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, I ii 57.
[112]*Ophelios*, the word which the Wests translate as benefit, means generally advantage, help, profit, usance. Critias' use of the term is ambiguous insofar as we are not certain if he means beneficial to be understood in terms of the perfection of the work of an art, or in terms of how this work is used to our harm or benefit. Socrates, for the sake of clarity, later substitutes "good for oneself" for "beneficial" in his restatement of Critias' view.

This is confusing, as it would seem to make more sense to delimit making as a subset of all doings, rather than the other way around.

Socrates had set working in opposition to what he called idling, but Critias does not set doing, the making of beautiful and beneficial things, in opposition to whatever would denominate the making of things neither beautiful nor beneficial. He says rather that only the beautiful and beneficial are truly "one's own," whereas the harmful things are alien (*allotria*, literally, "belonging to another"). He does not mention ugly (*aischrus*) as part of the opposition. If, by definition, one's own things are the beautiful and beneficial, then what would be conventionally regarded as "things of others," if they happen to be beautiful and beneficial, are also "kindred" or "one's own." As Critias has now interpreted his definition of *sophrosyne*, then, it does not really pivot on distinguishing the "things of others" from "one's own," but rather on the distinction between the beautiful and beneficial, on the one hand, and the harmful (and ugly?) on the other. While in a perverse sort of way this eliminates the problem of reconciling doing one's own things with making the things of others, it is a pernicious and utterly impractical conception of craftsmanship. Moreover, it implies that the virtue of moderation does not require restraint with respect to the possessions of others if they happen to be "beautiful and beneficial." One could be forgiven for seeing in Critias' words here a premonition of his behavior as leader of the Thirty Tyrants.[113]

If we follow what Critias has said, moreover, the actual result is not two clearly opposed subsets of makings, the beautiful/beneficial versus the harmful, but rather four subsets: 1. the beautiful which is beneficial, 2. the beautiful which is harmful, 3. the ugly which is harmful, and 4. the ugly which is beneficial. Critias has only really clarified how he stands in relation to the first three of these classes: the beautiful which is beneficial would be one's own, and assuming that he means *all* harmful things in opposition to this (an

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[113]Xenophon records the behaviour of the members of the Thirty toward the "things of others" in his *Hellenica*:
". . . [they] seized the arms of all except the Three Thousand, carried them up to the Acropolis, and deposited them in the temple. And now, when this had been accomplished, thinking that they were at length free to do whatever they pleased, they put many people to death out of personal enmity, and many also for the sake of securing their property" (II, iii, 21-22).

admittedly questionable assumption, since he seems to rather carelessly conflate the beautiful and the beneficial), the beautiful and the ugly which are harmful would be alien. We do not know how Critias stands in relation to those things which are ugly/shameful but nonetheless beneficial (*ophelios*); surely he would have to concede that even ugly shoes are beneficial. So the philosopher replies in the only way he can, "Critias, right away, even as you were beginning, I almost understood your argument: that you call things good that are kindred to oneself and one's own, and you call the makings of good things doings" (163d). If Critias notices how the philosopher has "clarified" his explanation, he does not mention it. Perhaps because by dropping out the evaluation of beauty, making the goodness of the thing contingent on its being one's own rather than the other way around, and noting that Critias delimits all doings as makings, Socrates articulates Critias' real view more clearly than Critias himself does. Apparently Socrates has suspicions about Critias' true views which he now attempts to draw out by questioning him at length about the relationship of the arts to the good.

4.1 163d-164c Moderation as the Doing of Good Things

So the philosopher advises Critias to slow down, "go back again and define it more plainly from the beginning" (163d).[114] He allows that Critias may be like the sophist Prodicus who draws (*diairountes*) ten thousand distinctions among names, but the philosopher demands that Critias be clear as to what he is referring, and be consistent in doing so. Socrates then points to a second confusion in Critias' definition by asking, "the doing of good things, or making, or however you wish to name it -- is *this* what you say moderation is?" Critias has made "doing" a subset of "making," and Socrates again subtly draws attention to this peculiarity of Critias' definition, in the course of insisting Critias be clear about naming. Here one should remember Socrates' question to Charmides, whether the reading and writing of names is actually *doing* something. The activity of naming and casting definitions, however, as it falls under the purview of Critias' definition of moderation, must be understood as

[114]Socrates stresses the need to make a good beginning. He sent Charmides back once, and sends Critias back twice (160d, 167ab.) Cf. *Republic*, 377ab.

either the making of good or bad things (Socrates' interpretation) or as the making of beautiful/beneficial things (Critias' original account). This would imply that in Critias' case one's own things include the distinctions he makes among names, and further implies that Critias will make such distinctions among names as are to his own good.[115] Socrates, however, demands that Critias be clear about these distinctions. Does not this demand prohibit Critias from simply pursuing his own good (i.e., through slippery word play), and force him to attend to the good of another?[116]

Critias seems to think that Socrates will agree with him that "he who does bad things is not moderate, but he who does good things is," but Socrates still professes to be unclear as to what Critias is saying moderation is. So, with perhaps not a little frustration, Critias attempts to clarify his definition by saying, "that he who makes not good but bad things is not moderate, whereas he who makes good but not bad things is moderate (163e)," a preposterous notion if one stops to think about it.[117] Having "clarified" this one question, however, Critias raises another. He seems unaware that in addition to the two opposing categories, the good and the bad, there is a possible third: that which is neither, the neutral (non-good, non-bad). Critias, however, seems blithely to identify the non-good with the bad, and the non-bad with the good. If what Socrates suspects is true, that Critias finally identifies the good with his own, his own qualities and relations and doings and makings, including, most importantly, his own beliefs, then it is likely that Critias is at best indifferent to the welfare of others except as it furthers his own, and that he would not recognize a common good which was not the imposition on others of what he himself believes is good. Socrates somewhat unexpectedly replies to Critias that nothing prevents him from speaking the truth, a remark which appears to accept Critias' honesty, but really calls it into question. The

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[115]This point is essential to understanding Critias himself: that he holds his own "makings," his beliefs, very dear.

[116]As we see, in any case, the problem of naming and distinguishing names is finally connected to the problem of understanding both moderation and the common good.

[117]While it may be generally true that being moderate would tend to make one a more skilled as well as a more just craftsman, surely many a pair of beautiful and useful shoes have been made by lascivious cobblers, whereas a perfectly continent doctor may have indifferent success in curing his patients.

definition, that is, which Critias is now putting forward is turning out to be a kind of socially acceptable face to his original definition that *sophrosyne* is the doing of one's own things. What he seems to believe, and what Socrates suspects, is that true moderation or "sound-mindedness" means looking exclusively after your own interests.

Socrates then asks, "I do wonder about this, whether you believe that human beings who are moderate are ignorant of being moderate" (165a)? He wonders, it seems, whether Critias believes that human beings who do the good things are ignorant of what the good things are. Critias says he does not believe this, something which if it did not reflect poorly upon his well-celebrated cousin, would certainly do so on himself. Thereupon Socrates returns to a point which he claims Critias had made earlier, "wasn't it said by you that nothing prevents craftsmen even when they make the things of others, from being moderate" (164a)? Critias agrees that he said this, either not remembering or not noticing that he had actually agreed with something rather different: "that they are moderate in *not* making *only* their own things" (163a, my emphasis). Thus the philosopher tacitly raises the problem of the frequent tension between one's own good and the good of others, and thus the issue of justice. Socrates cites the example of the doctor, asking, "But say whether in your opinion a certain doctor who makes someone healthy makes beneficial things for both himself and for him whom he doctors" (164ab)? Critias says that in his opinion, the doctor does. Presumably, the benefit to the doctor, in Critias' view, comes exclusively from the fee he is paid. But we should recall that Socrates has offered, as any doctor might, to try to cure Charmides for free. What benefit, if any, accrues to him from this service? Why does he do it? Might doing good things instill moderation? Be that as it may, to clarify the good that the doctor is doing, Socrates asks whether in making someone healthy, the doctor is doing what is needed (164b). He thus reminds us that we cannot understand this particular making of a good thing, health, apart from ascertaining the true needs of the body. The good which the doctor makes is guided by the standard of the good inherent in nature, the natural standard of bodily health. But that the necessary is good in this particular case should not lead one to any general conclusions about the relationship between necessity and the good. Here, Critias agrees that

the doctor, in doing what is needed, is moderate.[11]

Perhaps to remind us of the distinction between what is necessary and what is good, Socrates asks if it is itself necessary that the doctor *recognize* (*gignoskein*) when he is doctoring beneficially and when not. Insofar as there is guesswork and mistakes that turn out well, anyone has to admit that no such necessity exists. In this same vein, Socrates raises the question with respect to the other craftsmen, but formulating it somewhat differently he asks if it is necessary "for each of the craftsmen to recognize when he is going to profit from the work that he is doing and when not" (164b)? Politically speaking, the craftsman who produces the "needed" things of the polity, the food, houses, clothes, and shoes, does so with one eye on the good of others. His own good, his "profit" that is, would seem to be dependent upon his satisfying the needs and wants of his particular political partners, what they regard as good. Making beneficial things for himself is only possible if he makes beneficial things for others. This requires adhering to the standards of utility, economy, and beauty prevailing within the community with respect to the products of those arts. Both the doctor and the housebuilder, then, must be ruled in what they make by a standard of the good other than their own, the former by the natural standard of health for the body, and the latter by the partly conventional standards of the community. "Doing their own things," in this case doctoring and housebuilding, means making the good things of their art primarily for others.

Socrates now observes that a doctor sometimes does things beneficially, sometimes harmfully, and that according to Critias' argument when he does a beneficial thing, but does not himself recognize how he does it, he still acts moderately. Critias does not accept this; he seems to wish to judge the moderation or "sound-mindedness" of a craftsman according to the success or failure of his art. Socrates mentioning the fact that craftsmen can act harmfully perhaps has put the problem into perspective for Critias; he does not wish to allow that a

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[11]How necessity is understood politically, moreover, illustrates another problem: what might be politically necessary, that is, may in fact be preferring the good of some over the good of others. Understanding what is good in such cases is seldom straightforward, although one suspects that the norm in practice is that the good of those ruling takes precedent over that of the ruled.

truly moderate craftsman should ever be so ignorant as to do harm. To this end, Critias is willing to put aside everything he had said before, and speak unashamedly in favour of the position that a craftsman who would be ignorant of what he is doing, which Critias characterizes as being ignorant of himself, should not be called moderate. Thus he claims now that moderation must be knowing oneself, and we move into the discussion of self-knowledge wondering how the doing of good things, meaning things that turn out well, is connected to self-knowledge; how, that is, does the consciousness of the efficacy of one's action coincide with self-knowledge.

4.2 164c-176d Moderation and Self-Knowledge

With this question in mind, we move to a discussion on self-knowledge, the topic of which occupies the conversation until the dialogue's end. The philosopher has uncovered serious problems with both versions of the definition which Critias has proposed, and thus prompts Critias to attempt a third: "Know Thyself." We are at the exact centre of the dialogue when we reach the proposition which could be said to epitomize the Socratic way of life. Thus Critias "asserts" that "this is almost what moderation is: recognizing oneself; and I go along with the one who put up such an inscription at Delphi" (164d). As "almost" is not "exactly," one wonders what else, or what instead, moderation is.

With his young ward in earshot, then, Critias waxes eloquent about this inscription, himself apparently a diviner of the riddles of the god. He says it is a greeting rather than a counsel of the god in the sense that is is a kind of salutation to one's spiritual health. He explains that we should not view this salutation of the gods in the same way as we might the counsels, "Nothing too much," or "A pledge, and bane is near," which are merely evidences of the hubris of human beings who believe that their counsels are of the magnitude of the god's and of those who can divine the riddles of the god. Critias implies that the god's greeting is superior to the other two counsels because it does not prescribe limits to those who have the capacity to divine the inscription's true meaning: one who knows oneself does not require the arbitrary constraint of "Nothing too much," and as his only pledge is to his own

interests, "A pledge, and bane is near" is not a worrisome proposition.[119] Critias seems to reject, then, the common understanding of moderation which entails the very sort of restraint required by the two disparaged counsels. By this, he not only leaves open a question as to the status of this common understanding, but he also leaves open the question as to what self-knowledge "produces;" what concretely, that is, the having of self-knowledge would mean for the one who has it. As such, it is not clear how self-knowledge results in moderation.

Having been confronted with the prospect that on his view, one might be moderate (or "sensible") without knowing it, Critias retracts everything he had said before. Willfully ignoring the fact that he has been refuted a number of times, he graciously grants to Socrates that, "perhaps in some way you were speaking more correctly about them, perhaps I was, but nothing of what we were saying was quite plain" (165b). The honor-loving Critias implicitly characterizes the discussion as an eristic contest in which each participant pursues the individual good of victory rather than the common good of truth, and his fierce desire for honor prevents hims from acknowledging that Socrates has actually refuted his every assertion. He implies that Socrates recognizes *sophrosyne* is what Critias has just said it is, though for some selfish reason may not be willing to agree. Thus the philosopher again reminds Critias, "But Critias, you are coming at me as though I claim to know what I am asking about and would agree with you only if I should wish to. But this is not how it is, for I am inquiring along with you into whatever is put forward because I myself don't know" (165bc, cf. 163e). Despite his former association with the philosopher, this form of discussion still seems alien to Critias. He resists the idea that two people should subordinate their own wills to the common pursuit of truth, looking only to *logos*. It is the *logos* which should do the "persuading," rather than personal considerations or florid rhetoric. "So after I investigate," says the philosopher, "I am willing to say whether I agree or not" (165c). Critias brusquely replies, "Investigate, then."

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[119]Critias' rejection of the idea that a pledge is as at all binding or important should remind us of Socrates' earlier insistence on the necessity of keeping his own oath to the Thracian doctor (157c).

Socrates begins by asking, "if moderation is recognizing something, it is clear that it would be a kind of knowledge, and one that is *of* something, or wouldn't it" (165c)? Socrates gives Critias a choice, but Critias' curiousity is not piqued and he answers, "It is, namely, of oneself" (165c). If it is a knowledge of oneself, then, Socrates wonders what work this knowledge should produce. To indicate more clearly the intent of his question, Socrates raises again the example of medicine.[120] When Critias agrees that medicine is knowledge of the healthful, Socrates begins a kind of exemplary mock dialogue between himself and Critias such as should remind Critias of his own earlier insistence that moderation was the *making* of beautiful and beneficial things. The philosopher says that if Critias were to ask Socrates, "if doctoring is a knowledge of the healthful, in what respect is it useful for us, and what does it produce?" Socrates avows he would reply, "no little benefit; for it produces health, a beautiful work for us." When Socrates asks if Critias would accept this answer, Critias says that he would. Critias agrees, as virtually anyone would, that health is both beautiful and good for whoever enjoys it. And to the extent the health of one affects the well-being of another, it may even be regarded as a kind of common good. Might this have something to do with why the philosopher freely agrees to treat the head problem of young Charmides?

Socrates next alludes to housebuilding, asking that if Critias again should ask him about housebuilding and what work it produces, he would say houses. The philosopher does not pause to ask for Critias' approval, and Critias does not object. The philosopher generalizes, "And the same with the other arts." Socrates, however, has omitted with respect to housebuilding and the other arts an explicit acknowledgement that whatever they produce is either beautiful or beneficial.[121]

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[120]He might have done so in order to suggest that medicine is a kind of self-knowledge, namely of one's bodily nature -- and if the Thracian doctors are correct, of one's soul as well. It is amusing to imagine how Critias would have attempted to distinguish *sophrosyne* from medicine, "knowledge of oneself" from "knowledge of health." But the philosopher employs the example for another purpose.

[121]Perhaps he's bearing in mind Critias' earlier reference to the so-called oldest profession (163b); and that might not be the only problematic art.

Medicine, which Socrates says here is knowledge of health, produces health, something he apparently regards as intrinsically beautiful as well as beneficial. Moments before, however, he had observed that doctors sometimes don't know what they are producing, nor how they do it (164bc).[122] Socrates, however, has omitted with respect to housebuilding and the other arts, a consideration of their beauty and benefit. As for housebuilding, it is simply the knowledge whereby one produces houses, which are certainly useful, but (unlike health) are not necessarily beautiful. Knowledge of the art, then, produces the work which defines the art; but lacking the additional knowledge of beauty, it does not necessarily produce a beautiful work.[123] The apparent utility of what it produces is sufficient warrant for the existence of an art, though many are concerned as well, or instead, with the beauty of what they produce. The very existence of all of them, however, is evidence of the needs and wants of human beings, and as such of human nature, of what kind of thing oneself is, interested in beauty as well as utility.

Such considerations lay dormant as Socrates asks next about moderation, saying that given Critias' assertion that moderation is a knowledge of something, namely oneself, he should then be able to say what "beautiful work for us" it produces "worthy of its name." Only after expressly prodded to speak, Critias replies that Socrates is not inquiring correctly, and he then sets out to distinguish moderation, allegedly knowledge of oneself, from other kinds of knowledge.

Given his earlier preoccupation with what beautiful works are produced by one's doings and makings, it is curious that Critias does not offer the obvious answer: that moderation as self-knowledge produces a beautiful self. This very answer, however, raises a certain problem with Critias' definition. As Tucky points out, one cannot strictly identify moderation with knowing oneself unless knowing oneself is understood in a more profound

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[122]Medical knowledge does not manifest the certainty of geometry. Critias' failure to remember this suggests he may not have the knowledge of knowledge he later claims constitutes *sophrosyne*.

[123]As was pointed out earlier, in practice the housebuilder is tied to the standards of utility, economy, and beauty prevailing within the community itself, standards which are almost surely based on opinions about these things, not knowledge.

sense:

> . . . formally it is impossible to argue from the affirmation that a man, to act moderately must know himself to be moderate, to the identification of moderation with knowing oneself. All that can be argued from it is that a man cannot act moderately unless he knows himself to be moderate. This merely states a condition of moderation but brings us no nearer to a definition, unless the conception self-knowledge be given a deeper and more precise content that the formal argument allows.[134]

Moderation simply as knowledge of oneself would not produce a beautiful and good self, then, unless it is attended by a knowledge of what is beautiful and good. If one agrees that health is beneficial, and that the healthy are more beautiful than the sick, then medicine as a knowledge of health is able to produce this beautiful and beneficial work. Housebuilding, on the other hand, as a knowledge of making houses, and not specifically of beautiful houses, will only produce the type of house which is understood within the art; the housebuilder will not know his house to be beautiful. Similarly, it would seem, moderation as strictly knowledge of oneself will only produce at best the self coherent with the opinions about the beautiful and good, one's own or others'. One would not *know* therefore, oneself to be moderate, if through moderation is produced that which is truly beautiful and good.

Critias now denies that moderation as knowledge of oneself is like medicine or housebuilding; he says it does not produce any work at all, thereby avoiding the question of its beauty and benefit. He reprimands Socrates, using the philosopher's own standard: Socrates is not making the proper distinctions among natures, for self-knowledge "is not similar in its nature to the other knowledges," adding, "nor are the others to each other" (165e). But having just claimed moderation to be a unique kind of knowledge, Critias now undermines this claim by reminding us that calculation and geometry do not produce works in the same way that housebuilding produces a house, or weaving, a cloak. Even though it does not produce any material product, might not moderation be like certain arts after all? Apparently believing that this clinches his point, He challenges Socrates to point out any comparable product by such arts as calculation and geometry.

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[134]Tuckey, pp. 25-26, my translation.

Without demur, Socrates agrees that this is true, but he immediately adds that he can show Critias what each of these other knowledges are knowledges *of*, "which happens to be other than the knowledge itself" (166a).[125] Calculation, for example, is a knowledge of the even and the odd, something distinct from calculation itself; and weighing, of the heavy and the light which similarly are distinct from the measuring of the same in weighing. In the course of making his point, however, Socrates reminds us there is more to these arts: Calculation is not just of the even and the odd, but also of the principles by which the art comprehends them. Did Critias mean to imply that moderation *qua* knowledge of oneself is similar to knowledge of calculating, or of weighing, in that it includes knowledge of the principles by which we know the self, or knowledge of the principles by which the self knows anything? That is, does it include the knowledge by which we know *that* we know?

Thus Socrates asks Critias to clarify the object of moderation if moderation is *of* something: "Say, then, what is moderation also a knowledge of which happens to be different than moderation itself" (166b)? The answer would seem to be obvious, the answer Critias has repeatedly given: oneself. If asked to be more specific, he could reply, of one's hopes and fears, loves and hates, strengths and weaknesses, etc., and why one has them, how they interact, which are dominant and when, to what extent are they malleable, how will they change with age, etc., and most important, what way of life would be best for oneself. The "self" so conceived certainly seems different than the knowledge of it, as anyone who's ever been puzzled about himself knows. The curious thing, then, is why Critias doesn't say something along these lines. Is he hiding something about himself? Instead Critias insists that Socrates has stumbled upon his very point: moderation is different from all of the other knowledges in not having such an object, because "it alone is a knowledge both of the other knowledges, and of itself" (166c). Moderation, then, seems to be both a knowledge of what substantively constitutes the other knowledges and a knowledge of what formally constitutes knowledge itself. Critias adds that Socrates is "far from being unaware of this," implying that

[125]We actually do receive a sort of beneficial work from these "non-productive arts" insofar as they are used for making measurements for arts such as housebuilding. They are not purely theoretical arts.

Socrates already shares this understanding of *sophrosyne* and is simply being obtuse for the sake of attempting to refute Critias, "letting go of the argument itself" (166c). Critias is accusing the philosopher of a kind of sophistry, of refuting for the sake of refutation, presumably out of a love of victory or honor.[126]

Socrates responds to Critias' accusation by emphatically insisting that Critias has misinterpreted what Socrates is doing, that the philosopher is not refuting Critias simply for the sake of refutation but because he is afraid, he says, that "unawares I might ever suppose I know something when I don't know" (166d). Critias presumes, as did many of his contemporaries, that Socrates knows much more than he admits. Like most people, Critias is not careful to distinguish knowledge from belief. Socrates doubtless holds opinions, but even the most well-considered ones are not to be confused with knowledge. Thus the philosopher can honestly insist he is not "refuting" from a position of knowledge, but rather from a position of ignorance, and for the sake of learning. By this he seems to suggest that one can never assume that one knows something, and that it is because of this awareness of one's own self and thus of one's ignorance, that one pursues an investigation.[127]

Critias has just articulated a view of "self-knowledge" or moderation which seems to suggest that a kind of comprehensive knowledge of knowledge is possible, such that one *can* say finally that one knows something. He has avoided, or believes he has avoided, the question of what beauty or benefit we derive from such knowledge. Is he consciously doing so? As for himself, Socrates tells Critias, he is investigating the argument mostly for his own sake, but "perhaps also for [his] other companions." And by way of elaborating "also," the philosopher asks Critias a truly loaded question: "Or don't you suppose that it is common good for almost all human beings that each thing that exists should become clearly apparent

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[126]It is probably not surprising to the philosopher that Critias should finally define moderation as knowledge of knowledges, given Critias' earlier definition of moderation as the *making* of good things. Making good things would presume having the knowledge to do so. If this is what we are to understand as "knowledge of oneself," however, one wonders what Critias' view of the self must be, something which identifies itself by its knowledge? Ironically, there may be something to this.

[127]This does not rule out, of course, that one must also have the knowledge to ask the appropriate questions.

just as it is" (166d)? Critias emphatically agrees that he does. Thus Socrates rallies him to give frank answers, letting go of what may be the primary political concern for Critias at this point, who is being refuted, he or Socrates.[128]

On the assumption that Critias is now going to say how whatever is asked appears to him, Socrates asks him again, "Say then, what are you saying about moderation." Critias approximately repeats what he had said before, "that it alone of the other knowledges is a knowledge both of itself and of the other knowledges" (166e). As Socrates points out, however, if Critias is to have a comprehensive knowledge of knowledge, then it must also be a knowledge of what is not knowledge. Critias agrees; he wishes to have a comprehensive knowledge of the other knowledges and of knowledge itself. Socrates then suggests that there is a certain additional benefit to be derived from this: that the one having this knowledge of knowledge and non-knowledge and of the other knowledges will not only know himself as such, but will also have the power (*dunatos*) to examine what he himself happens to know and what not, and have the power as well to examine others, both what they do know and what they merely suppose they know. No one else would have the power to do this. One would, then, not only be able to examine oneself and others on the basis of this knowledge, but also "recognize oneself;" this would seem to suggest that one's personal identity is essentially established by what one *thinks* (and not, for example, by one's constellation of passions and appetites). Socrates asks Critias if how Socrates has characterized Critias' argument is what he is really saying, that "this is what being moderate, and moderation, and oneself recognizing oneself is: knowing both what one knows and what one does not know" (167a). Critias says that this is what he is saying and Socrates now accepts this as a definition.

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[128]One can never forget that Critias' young cousin and ward is listening to the conversation. What seem to be constant reminders to Critias, however, that only the *logos* or truth should matter, are reminders to us that the truth is not, for Critias or for most people, an intrinsic good. We tend, that is, to subordinate the truth to what we would prefer to believe.

4.2.1 Knowledge of Knowledge and Non-Knowledge

Thus Socrates says that they must go "back again" "as if from the beginning" (167ab). With these words, the philosopher links this third beginning with the first one, where Socrates pointed out that Critias wanted to call one's own things good, and thus the doing of one's own things came to be understood as the doing of good things (cf. 163d). A second beginning had occurred when Critias willingly jettisonned everything said before in favour of the view that *sophrosyne* is knowledge of oneself (165ab). Socrates' express reference to "the third one for the Savior" reminds us of the several times before he investigated others, revealing to their own satisfaction (or dissatisfaction, more likely) that they did not know what they supposed they knew. If one carefully examines how he accomplishes this without himself claiming to know what *sophrosyne* is, one notices that the second and central of Critias' definitions, "knowledge of oneself," was never really refuted, but merely abandoned by Critias in favour of still the third definition about to be investigated. One also notices that at each new beginning, the philosopher points to a problem which is running through the arguments: the question of how one knows if what one does is good.[129] This is to be the final "libation" Socrates says. If we are returning to a consideration of how one knows that the things one does are good, then knowing what one knows and what one does not may be seen as the final attempt at understanding how this is possible.[130]

Socrates wishes then to investigate two things, first, whether it is possible to know what one knows and to know what one does not know; and second, even if it *is* possible, what benefit there would be in us knowing it. Socrates, then, will not relent on the question of benefit, but he wishes first to investigate if it is possible not only to have a knowledge of knowledge in the substantive sense of having knowledge *of* something, but also if it is possible to know *that* one knows what one knows. He suggests that, in the final analysis, this would

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[129]With the words, "back again," Socrates may also be linking Charmides' own going "back again" at 163d with the two places in the conversation with Critias where he uses the same expression. Charmides' own new beginning also foundered on the question of the good. Cf. 160d-161b.

[130]As Bruell points out, "a knowledge of what one knows and does not know may be as close as one can come to knowing the goodness of what one does." Bruell, p. 173.

require being able also to know that one does *not* know. Socrates says he finds this possibility perplexing, and he offers to tell Critias how it is that he is perplexed.[131]

The philosopher thus advises Critias to "see what a strange thing" they are trying to say. Socrates sees it, and offers to try to help Critias see what is strange about this third definition (the perplexing reflexivity of knowledge about knowledge) by comparing it with certain "other things," in which, the philosopher supposes, "it will seem to you to be impossible (*adunaton*)." Critias, forgetting his claim about the uniqueness of this particular kind of knowledge, asks "How and where" (167c)? The philosopher then goes through nine things in the following order; seeing, hearing, all perception, desire, will (or wish), love, fear, opinion, and knowledge. He begins with seeing:

> "Think over whether in your opinion there is a kind of seeing of seeing that is not of what the other seeings are of, but is a seeing of itself and of the other seeings, and in the same way of non-seeing: one which, although it is a seeing, sees no color, but sees itself and the other seeings. In your opinion is there such a one" (167cd)?

Critias, ignoring Socrates' advice to think it over, swears there is not. His opinion, however common sensical, is mistaken. To begin with, there are two ways of comprehending the possibility of what Socrates is asking, first with respect to the physical sense of vision via the eye of the body, and second with respect to the vision of the mind (as above, in "seeing" what is strange about this definition).[132] And even with respect to the physical sense, we are able to see seeing in two ways. First, inasmuch as we are able to observe sight itself, we see that seeing (as well as other things, e.g. air) is invisible;[133] thus we have a seeing not only of itself and the other seeings, but also of non-seeings. Second, with respect to the sense of sight itself, we have a sense of this sense; that is, we see not only *what* we see, i.e. colored shapes, but *that* we see, thus seeing sees itself and the other seeings. In the same way, there is a seeing of the mind which, in being aware of itself, sees that it sees and not simply what it sees. Just

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[131]Socrates seems, then, to be able to articulate his own "non-knowledge." One cannot be knowledgeable and perplexed at the same time with respect to the same thing.

[132]All the perceptions, but especially seeing and hearing, have a kind of dual character, applicable to both the body and the mind.

[133]It is easy to imagine it otherwise, e.g., seeing as cones of colored light projected from the eyes.

as with bodily vision, we are also able to variously characterize the sight of the mind, distinguishing clear sight from clouded. For Critias, what Socrates asks is so far outside of his ordinary experience that he will swear by Zeus (his first oath) that in his opinion there is no such thing as Socrates asks. He has not thought long, then, either about how we are to understand the physical sense of sight, or why human beings refer so readily, so naturally, to the mind's ability to *see*. Critias sees seeing only as directed at the other things which are its objects; as he sees it, it is not at all reflexive. He has not carefully observed seeing, and thus has not noticed, e.g., the difference between the passivity of seeing and the activity of observing.

Socrates next considers hearing, and asks, "what about a hearing that hears no sound, but hears itself and the other hearings and non hearings" (167d)? Strange as it may seem at first blush, hearing too, hears not only sound, but hears itself and the other hearings and non-hearings. We hear that the night is quiet (how else would we know that it is?), and that normal hearing is quiet (as anyone knows who's ever had a ringing in his ears). It is also reflexive inasmuch as it has a sense of itself; you cannot hear and yet be unaware that you hear.[134] And what the mind hears when people speak is more than simply sounds; what Charmides hears when Socrates speaks would be just so much Greek to Shakespeare's Casca (cf. 159a). Not having thought any more about hearing than about sight, however, Critias promptly discounts the possibility that hearing is reflexive.

Socrates next recommends that Critias "investigate" (cf. 165c) all perception, and asks summarily, "concerning all perceptions whether in your opinion there is a kind of perception of perceptions and of itself that perceives nothing of what the other perceptions perceive" (167d)? Critias says that in his opinion there is no such thing. But if one takes the trouble to investigate, one sees that in order to understand the senses, one must have an understanding of how we are aware of these senses. Thus we can understand our physical perception of perceptions by considering the difference between our waking and sleeping states: awake, we

[134]One can understand this sense of itself with respect to seeing by considering what we are asking when we tell someone to "look," and with respect to hearing when we tell someone to "listen," an activity (compared with the passivity of hearing).

have a perception of our perceptions; asleep, we have no such perception. Is there not an analogue to this with respect to the mind: an active, working state, and a passive, sleeping state?[135] This perception of perception, however, presumes a recognition of a self which perceives. This would be a kind of rudimentary knowledge of oneself as a self, what we might call a "self-consciousness."[136]

Having dealt with the perceptions, Socrates then moves to the desires and passions. He asks first, "But is there in your opinion a kind of desire that is a desire of no pleasure, but is of itself and of the other desires?" As Socrates has taken away desire's customary object, pleasure, Critias replies adamantly, "of co rse not" (167e). He does not recognize, then, what would be part of a self-conscious attempt to become moderate: that one would desire only certain kinds of desires which would contribute to one's moderation, and one would, further, desire to have this very desire itself.[137]

Thus Socrates moves to "willing" (*boulomai*).[138] He asks, "nor a will, I suppose, that wills nothing good but wills itself and the other wills" (167e). Critias offers his now customary response, but he again overlooks that one can will to have a strong will, and also will to stop being "willful," and that in fact such willing would be characteristic of one in search of self-control, indeed central to such an aspiration (just as it is the central of the nine things considered). It seems possible, that is, for willing to become an object of itself, that self-conscious willing may epitomize this will willing itself.

The philosopher then moves to what may well be the most problematic of the passions listed, "Would you assert that there is a kind of erotic love such that it happens to be a love

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[135]It is when Socrates tells Charmides that the moderation in him should furnish some perception of itself, that he then has a perception of this perception. Cf. 159a. Recall, also, Socrates' suggestion in the *Apology* that most people doze through life, unaware of what they do, unless stung to wakefulness by some gadfly. cf. *Apology* 30d-31a.

[136]One should note that seeing and hearing are the only ones of the nine of which Socrates expressly asks if it is possible for these to have their own power toward their negatives: a seeing of non-seeing, and a hearing of non-hearing. We have to remind ourselves that we taste when something is tasteless, smell that something is odorless, etc.

[137]An example would be desiring the desire to exercise one's physical or mental faculties so as to hone them to their greatest pitch.

[138]The Wests translate this as "wish" or "wishing".

of nothing beautiful, but is of itself and of the other loves" (167e)? Critias understands there to be only a love of things beautiful, but given what's gone before, Socrates' question suggests that there may be a *kind* of love which loves itself and the other loves. In a simple sense, we understand a kind of love of love when we speak of those who not only love being in love, but who also love the whole idea of love. This in itself, however, may still be a love of the beautiful. There may also be, however, a love of love itself by a soul which seeks the power of a great *eros*, that this love itself is of "nothing beautiful" but of *eros* itself. One can see how a great *eros* would provide one the greatest power to succeed in whatever was the focus of that love: a very great love of wisdom, or a very great love of self-rule would direct a very great power toward these things, thus one would love *eros* itself because it promises the the greatest power. Aside from this kind of instrumental love of love, however, there remains the possibility that profound knowledge of something presumes a love of it, thus a profound knowledge of love would entail a kind of love of love.[139]

Of the passions, then, Socrates finally asks Critias, "have you ever noticed a kind of fear that fears itself and the other fears, but fears not even one of the terrible things" (167e-168a)? Critias, characteristically, has not noticed any, but it would seem that one might in fact fear one's own cowardice, that one would, in this sense, have "a kind of fear of fear," a fear of being overcome by fear. Indeed, the memoirs of soldiers are replete with testimony that this was their dominant fear, the fear that they would fail the test of battle and prove a coward. Moderation itself may entail a recognition of such a fear as the only legitimate fear one should have.

It is becoming obvious, however, that Critias has an understanding neither of the soul nor of *sophrosyne*, having no awareness as to how the motions of the soul are necessarily self-reflexive. Prodded by the philosopher's questions, it has come to light that one *is* able to become the object of one's own concern, thus become able to both study and cultivate one's own desires, will, loves, and fears toward a certain order in the soul. If Critias is not aware of this, it is most likely that any education in *sophrosyne* which he may have attempted with

[139]Socrates himself claims to be an expert on erotic matters. Cf *Symposium* 212bc.

respect to himself or his ward has been undertaken without a profound understanding of what that education requires. One would have to question, then, if such a superficial understanding of the soul could provide the basis for any enduring virtue.

Socrates next moves to that intermediary between non-knowledge and knowledge, opinion. He asks Critias if he has noticed "an opinion of opinions and of itself, but which opines nothing of what the others opine" (168a). Critias replies that "in no way" has he noticed such a phenomena, but one is hard-pressed to understand the status of his own reply as anything other than an opinion of opinion. The problem, it would seem, is that of distinguishing knowledge from opinion, so as to be able to recognize opinion when we see it. We need to replace opinions about opinion with knowledge of opinions, as well as knowledge of knowledge and non-knowledge. The problematic nature of doing so, however, does not prevent us from seeing that an opinion of opinions and thus of itself is possible. We take this for granted when we propose to investigate another's opinion; we opine that it is an opinion, and wish to form our own opinion about it.

Having too easily secured Critias' agreement that the strange and perplexing reflexivity which he claims characterizes *sophrosyne* has no counterpart in other things of the soul (and the things examined would seems to be the principal means whereby we gain an awareness of both ourselves and our world: perception, inner experiences, and opinions), Socrates concludes, "But it seems we assert that there is a kind of knowledge such that it is a knowledge of nothing learned, but is a knowledge of itself and of the other knowledges" (168a). This should seem exceedingly strange to Critias now, for he clearly does not comprehend the self-reflexive character of the soul, so he cannot further comprehend the reflexive character of its knowing. It would seem, however, that we must have "a *kind* of knowledge" that is itself *not* something *learned* in order to learn anything else, that we must "instinctively" recognize when we've learned, that all modes of learning cannot have been learned. Critias wishes to say that we can actually have the knowledge that we know something. He seems to mean by this that we can have knowledge of what formally

constitutes knowledge.[140] Critias, however, cannot provide an explanation of this knowledge itself, how we would know or learn that these formal requirements truly constitute a definition of knowledge. Doing so would seem to require a "knowing" which is prior to knowledge in Critias' sense, and this knowing would need to be reflexive; it would have to know itself as knowing. Critias, however, seems to have completely forgotten his claim that knowledge of knowledge is uniquely different from the other knowledges.

Socrates does not stop at this point; he wishes to investigate this strange thing yet further. He characterizes this knowledge of knowledge as one which has a kind of power to be *of* something. Critias agrees emphatically. Nonetheless the philosopher elaborates, using quantitative examples, such as "the greater," which he asserts has the power to be greater *than* something, which would necessarily have to be less. Critias continues to agree; perhaps he feels he is on familiar ground again, and we do seem to be investigating at this point Critias' view of knowledge, which it should be noted is mathematical, or quantitative, throughout. Of this power to be greater, then, Socrates asks if it is possible for such to be of itself. If knowledge has the characteristic of having to be greater than its object, thus if its object is itself, then it must be both greater than itself and less than itself. This would seem, with respect to magnitudes, an impossibility. As Levine points out, it would violate the principle of non-contradiction.[141]

Socrates turns then to multitudes. By speaking of the double, he is turning to the relationship of discrete entities to themselves and to each other. With respect to such entities it would seem impossible for them to have their own power toward themselves, thus it cannot be, by virtue of the fact that the double is a discrete quantity unto its own, both a double of something else and of itself.

Thus, Socrates recapitulates, noting that with respect to substantial things and relationships (such as the more to the less, the heavier to the lighter, and the older to

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[140]His own earlier examples of calculation and geometry may be paradigms of this kind of knowledge.

[141]Levine, p. 242. We have just seen, however, how the human faculties are able to have their own power toward themselves; they become, that is, their own object.

younger) we do not allow that a thing which has a certain power can have its own power toward itself. In further substantiation of this rule, Socrates turns again to hearing and seeing. He reminds Critias that they had said hearing was not of anything other than of sound such that if it is to hear itself, it must have a sound, and that in the same way, if seeing was to see itself, it would require color. Thus, for those things which they went through, some (sizes, quantities and the like) seem impossible, and others we would vigorously *distrust* (*a-pisteitai*) as having their own power with regard to themselves.[142]

Socrates does not leave this as a final conclusion; he elaborates still further on certain possibilities, "However, hearing and seeing, *again*, and further, a motion moving itself and a heat kindling, and again, all such things, might afford distrust to some, but perhaps not to certain others" (168e-169a, my emphasis).[143] Notice the philosopher expressly and repeatedly leaves open the possibility of there being some kinds of self-relations, however strange and perplexing they may at first appear. Is not motion moving itself and heat kindling characteristic of the soul?[144] Those who attend only to things outside themselves, failing to reflect sufficiently on the self doing the attending, will not recognize the possibility of any of the reflexive powers of the soul. Ironically, this includes Critias, the very man who ventured that *sophrosyne* is doing one's own things self-consciously, that it is knowledge of oneself, that it is knowledge of knowledge -- all of which, rightly understood, may be pertinent to understanding *sophrosyne*. What is needed is to distinguish all of the things that *are* and investigate their relations both with others and with themselves to see, of each one, if *by nature* it has its own power with regard to itself. If we should find things in which this is the case, it is among these that we must look for the knowledge which we are now asserting is moderation.

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[142]Trust (*pistis*) is the term which Socrates uses in the *Republic* to describe our attitude toward that part of the realm of opinion which he calls the "originals." This is the visible realm in which we trust in the existence of the things which we see. This trust would seem to be necessary on the pain of absolute chaos, but it does not constitute knowledge.

[143]Socrates has repeated here the examples of hearing and seeing, perhaps to point to their dual nature, being both of the body and of the mind.

[144]See Jacob Klein, *A Commentary on Plato's "Meno"* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965), pp. 24-25.

Socrates says that he does not trust himself to draw the necessary distinctions, but that "some great man" who can do so with respect to everything.[145] We can see, however, that the philosopher is being ironical, that he has in fact made some such distinctions within his own soul, suggesting through his leading questions the possibility of our doing so as well. The philosopher says now, however, that he does divine (*manteuomai*) that moderation is something beneficial and good.[146] Did he see something in his own investigation of the soul which gave rise to this divination? Or did Critias' own powerlessness to make an investigation suggest it.[147] In any case, Socrates would like now to investigate the beneficiality of the conception of moderation which Critias set down, that true *sophrosyne* is "a knowledge of knowledge and particularly of non-knowledge." But before doing so, he challenges Critias to prove his greatness by showing "first that it is possible *for you* to demonstrate what I was just saying, and then, in addition to being possible, that it is also beneficial" (169b, my emphasis).

Critias, however, is unable to answer. Hearing what the philosopher has said, and seeing him apparently at a loss, Critias demonstrates a distinct lack of self-mastery: he is infected by Socrates' perplexity, "just as those who see people yawning right across from them have the same happen to them" (169c). Critias, however, is not moved or ruled by his perplexity so much as by his pride, feeling "ashamed before those present." Like his young ward who earlier was left "speechless (*alogon*)" because he did not wish to tarnish the others' opinion about him, Critias is unwilling to honestly admit his perplexity for fear of tarnishing his own reputation. However attractive a sense of shame is in youths such as Charmides (cf.

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[145]There seems also to be a certain kind of trust required in one's ability to make such distinctions. Socrates does not say what would constitute the basis of this trust, but it would seem to depend on having an adequate understanding of how perception (misperception) work, how one's desires and wishes and loves and fears may affect one's judgement, how to assess opinions, etc.
Megethos was earlier used to describe Charmides, and Charmides' mother's side of the family. Perhaps the philosopher sees the potential of the young man to become such a great man.

[146]Socrates conjoins beneficial and good here, perhaps suggesting that moderation can be both good for oneself and good for others, or both instrumentally and intrinsically good.

[147]We should notice here that he divines only the goodness of moderation, and not also its beauty.

158c), shame makes Critias unable to speak the truth, and thus to do what is needed to overcome his perplexity. Socrates provides for our consideration, then, the example of how Critias' lack of self-knowledge works against his own good.[148]

If it were up to Critias, then, the discussion would be at a standstill. It is the soul of Socrates which sets it in motion again, gracefully proposing a concession which may ease the present discomfiture of Critias.[149] Socrates will allow, "so that our argument may go forward," that it is possible for a knowledge of knowledge to come to be. They will proceed on this assumption, leaving off its investigation for some other time. As they are agreed that it is possible for one to know *that* one knows, Socrates now states, "even if this *is* possible, how is one any more able to know both *what* one knows and what not? For this surely was what we were saying was to recognize oneself and to be moderate, weren't we" (169d)?[150]

Critias agrees, and he reiterates this conclusion by saying that one who has a knowledge that itself recognizes itself would *be* of the same sort as what he has, "much as one who has swiftness is swift and one who has beauty is beautiful." Whether he realizes it or not, both of his illustrations allude to Charmides. As noted before, the one who has swiftness may nonetheless choose to do certain things slowly (cf. 159b), and the one who has beauty may nonetheless not be "altogether beautiful" (cf. 155de). While the philosopher will apparently accept that someone having that which is cognizant of itself will thereby recognize himself, he does not see how this would necessarily mean that the one who has this cognition will also "know both what he knows and what he does not know" (169e). Socrates does not see, that is, how having cognition of oneself on Critias' terms constitutes a comprehensive

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[148]Critias himself had agreed that it is the common good that "each thing that exists become clearly apparent just as it is" (166d). As revealed before in the discussion with Charmides, shame sometimes works against what is beneficial; Homer's Telemachos may be right in contending that shame is not good for a needy man, especially when it prevents his acknowledging his needfulness.

[149]Critias, after all, has been unable to defend the possibility of there being a knowledge of knowledge, making it patently obvious that he doesn't himself have knowledge of knowledge, and so isn't *sophronos* by his own definition.

[150]We should note that at the point at which we would have expected to investigate the benefit of such a knowledge, Socrates investigates instead the question of whether, by virtue of such knowledge, one is able to know *what* one knows and what not. See Bruell, pp. 194-195.

knowledge of knowledge such that one would *be* knowledgeable in a substantial sense, knowing both what one knows and what not. Critias does not see the distinction the philosopher is making. Socrates tries to explain by saying that he does not understand how knowing what one knows oneself would enable one to know what anyone does not know. Not surprisingly, this clarification of the issue does not help Critias much, who understandably replies, "What are you saying?"

Critias by now is beside himself with puzzlement, so Socrates slows down and begins to explain exactly what he means. The philosopher asks whether a knowledge of knowledge would be able to distinguish anything more than that something is a knowledge, and another is not. Critias replies, "No, but only that much." Socrates then asks Critias if "knowledge and nonknowledge of the healthful and knowledge and nonknowledge of the just are the same," pointing out, upon Critias' negative answer, that one is doctoring, one politics, and one (knowledge of knowledge presumably) nothing other than knowledge (170b).[131] But if one has only knowledge of knowledge, and not also knowledge of the healthful and the just, what substantially does he know? One with a knowledge of knowledge would be able to recognize that he has a knowledge of "something," but apparently would not have a clue as to what it substantially is.[132]

As Socrates elucidates the problem:

> "But how will he know by *this* knowledge that he recognizes? For he recognizes the healthful by doctoring, not by moderation; harmonics by music, not by moderation; and housebuilding by housebuilding, not by moderation, and so on in everything" (170bc).

It seems impossible, given only an utterly formal knowledge of what constitutes knowledge, to recognize what any more substantial knowledge, such as that which constitutes the arts, is knowledge *of*, much less understand the actual principles by which an art is practiced. As

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[131]This is the only time that politics is explicitly mentioned in the dialogue. The point is made by the contrast to doctoring that a knowledge of politics would have a very different character than that of the other more "technical" arts.

[132]This would seem to be *all* that he knows of himself and others, that they do or do not have knowledge. Bizarre as all this sounds, it is perilously close to the aspirations of Logical Positivism, a philosophic school which until recently dominated thinking about science.

Socrates has noted, one would only be able to say of an art that it is a knowledge. This view presents a double problem, then, of not being able to recognize either the purpose or the practice of any given art. This would only be known by the practitioner of the art. We are reminded that this is so by Socrates' apparent "slip-up" in saying "housebuilding by housebuilding" rather than "the well-built house by housebuilding." For, of course, the art of housebuilding does allow one to do both, whereas Critias' conception of "knowledge of knowledge" allows one to do neither, nor to distinguish it from either medicine or harmonics.

Insofar as moderation is simply knowing *that* one knows, but not *what* one knows, then one possessing such a totally abstract facility will not "be able to examine whether another claiming to have knowledge of something does have knowledge or doesn't have knowledge of what he says he has knowledge of." One could only establish that he has "a kind of knowledge," but would not be able to recognize "what it is of" (170d). Thus Socrates suggests, "he won't be able to judge between one who pretends to be a doctor but is not and one who truly is." So Charmides might be moderate in this sense but not be able to see through the ruse Critias employed in introducing him to the philosopher (155b). Or is it Critias who cannot recognize a true doctor when he meets one? In any case, according to Socrates, the "moderate one" would not be able to distinguish a true craftsman from a pretender. But isn't this precisely the one thing that he *should* be able to do: recognize *that* someone knows (when he does), or *that* someone does not know (when he doesn't)? He may not know what kind of knower someone is, but he should be able to distinguish him from a pretender. Why doesn't Critias raise this objection? Perhaps he simply doesn't know what he is talking about. But if one thinks about it some more, one sees that Socrates is right, after all. For, if a knowledgeable carpenter were to pose as a doctor, Critias' "moderate" man could not detect this imposture. And since virtually everyone is a knower of some kind, even if no more than a knower of one's native tongue (cf. 159a), everyone is potentially a successful pretender.

The craftsman, in turn, does not have knowledge of the kind of knowledge which the moderate one possesses, but rather only knowledge of what Socrates now characterizes as "the

things of his art" (171b). The doctor is said to have knowledge of the "healthful and the diseaseful," about which only another doctor can question him. Knowledge of the healthful, insofar as this includes knowing how to restore health, necessarily includes knowing how to recognize departures from health, disease, and what causes disease. This is, as Socrates characterizes it, what doctoring itself is "involved in." One can only investigate this by investigating "in what is spoken and done in a certain way whether what is spoken is truly spoken and what is done is correctly done" (171b). It should be noted, however, that knowledge of disease is something open-ended, indeed potentially infinite; for whereas health is one thing (the naturally best condition), there is practically an infinitude of ways to be unhealthy, some common, some very rare, perhaps some still to arise and therefore still unknown. He who is truly knowledgeable about knowledge would recognize in what respects, e.g., carpentry, harmonics, medicine, geometry, politics, etc., are the same, and in what respects they are different, and why so (e.g., the respective roles of perceptual evidence, induction, analysis, etc.)

Socrates now "reminds" Critias that if, as in the beginning, they were asserting that should one be able to possess a knowledge "both of what he knows and what he does not know--that he knows the one and that he doesn't know the other--and be able to investigate someone else in this same state," that such a moderation would be grandly beneficial to us (171d). And if such a one or ones existed and were ruling, he says further, it would be possible to govern a city, and even a household, so as to ensure that anything to be done would be done correctly.[153] A moderate person, then, "would not attempt to do what he didn't have knowledge of," but would find those who did and engage them to do it; moreover, he would not turn over to those he happened to rule any task they weren't capable of doing correctly, "and this would be what they had knowledge of" (171e). If this were the case, Socrates concludes, "it is *necessary* for those so situated to do beautifully and well in every doing, and for those who do well to be happy" (172b). Socrates asks Critias whether

[153]Socrates conjoins city and household without any warrant. Critias does not question him about this, though it seems that ruling a city and ruling a household are not entirely the same.

this isn't what they were saying early on. It isn't, but it may well be what Critias has been thinking all along.

Critias agrees completely. Socrates seems to have described Critias' own version of Utopia, everything done well and beautifully according to knowledge. Unfortunately, however, this kind of knowledge does not appear to be possible insofar as it would require one to have a comprehensive knowledge of knowledge itself, and comprehensive knowledge of each of the knowledges.[154] Moreover, it presumes that all the arts are complete, that there is no guesswork or failures (as we've been reminded there are; cf. 164c); and that there is a diviner's art by means of which one can gain "a knowledge of what is going to be" (173c; cf. 174a, 169b, 164e). Thus what they have discovered moderation might be--"having knowledge of knowledge and non-knowledge"--has only this personal benefit: the one who has it is able to "learn more easily whatever he learns" because he is able to discern the knowledge in each thing such that each thing becomes more distinct to him. But having this ability to discern such knowledge, he is able to examine if others also have learned what he has learned. Thus he can examine others "more beautifully" while those without moderation would do so "more weakly and poorly." What personal advantage there would be to this is hard to see, but that it could have political consequences seems clear enough. If one felt obliged for some reason to acquaint others with their ignorance, as Socrates is doing in this dialogue, moderation might enable one to do so without arousing their resentment, and thereby avoid the fate of Socrates (cf. *Apology*, 22e ff.).

Socrates asks a strange question about this, however: he says "are we looking at something greater and requiring it to be greater than it is" (172c)? Thus he subtly hearkens back to the earlier discussion of "the greater" not having the power to be greater than itself (168bc). He may be suggesting that this understanding of moderation as a knowledge that we know and that we do not know must actually be based on the "greater" knowledge of knowledge itself which Critias is unable to see. As such, Critias can only assume what he

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[154]What Socrates really seems to be saying, however, is that this knowledge itself cannot even justify itself as knowledge because it cannot do so without recourse to some understanding of how knowledge must be reflexive.

believes he knows is genuine knowledge, and that he is able thus to examine the extent of others' knowledge. Socrates' point would be, however, that having a *complete* understanding of knowledge itself would require, as he had earlier described, having an understanding of the soul, and of the motions in the soul in regard to themselves and to each other. It would require self-knowledge in a complete sense.

Socrates says to Critias that certain strange things about moderation are now becoming "clearly apparent" to him if moderation is as Critias sees it. In explanation of these things, Socrates proposes that they allow a certain assumption to be set down; "let us grant what we were setting down moderation to be from the beginning," he says, "knowing both what one knows and what one does not know" (172c). He proposes, then, that they not "strip away" this assumption, as they have previously, so that they can investigate whether such a thing would be of profit to us if it were "leading the management of both household and city" (172d). Socrates thus has dropped the question of whether this moderation is possible in order to argue with another of Critias' opinions: that this moderation is also beneficial. The philosopher believes that they have not "agreed beautifully" because they were not "investigating correctly" (172e). Socrates now swears for his fourth and last time. He swears "by the dog," that peculiar oath characteristic of him (which may, as *Gorgias* suggests, signify Anubis, the mediator in Egyption theology between the upper and lower world).[155]

Critias demands that Socrates speak and thus contribute to the common good of their all knowing what he means. Socrates prefaces what he about to say with the warning that he may be only babbling, but it is his concern for himself which prompts his investigation: "it is necessary to investigate just what appears and not to pass by indifferently if one is concerned for oneself even a little" (173a).[156] The philosopher explains that what now appears to him

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[155]*Gorgias* 482b. Dogs, and their training, moreover, act in the *Republic* as an exemplification of how one would train the spirits of the warriors so as to be courageous defenders of the city. We do not, by Critias' account of moderation, have a very profound understanding of the human spirit, that central and most problematic part of the soul, and how it could be trained. See *Republic* 375a-376c.

[156]As women are typically known as the consummate babblers, it is fitting that Socrates should ally his own dream with that of Penelope in the *Odyssey*. Penelope

appears as a dream in which Critias' utopian city is realized. All of the arts would be done in strict accordance with knowledge so as to minimize the chance of error: pilots, thus, would have better control against the forces of nature, doctors better expertise in the health of the body, and generals better strategies against enemies in war.[157] All of the arts, furthermore, would be done more artfully, so as to provide us the best equipment which each art could produce.[158] The philosopher even allows, as he must to complete the Utopia, that there is such a thing as a diviner's art which would give us greater predictive powers. We thus not only have better control against all of the forces of nature, but we improve our mastery of chance. On the surface, it is a very attractive Utopia.

The philosopher, however, is not satisfied. He says to Critias that there is one thing that they are not yet able to learn: "that in acting knowledgeably we would do well and be happy" (173d). Critias, ever attentive to honor, replies, "You will certainly not easily find some other delimitation of 'doing well' if you dishonor 'knowledgeably.'" Perhaps Socrates is sympathetic with Critias' dream; he speaks of him as a friend (*phile*) and acknowledges that in his own opinion also a "happy man is defined well as one who lives knowledgeably (173e)," but the philosopher suggests that Critias' understanding of what living knowledgeably means is misconceived. He asks Critias now to teach him a "little thing in

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[156](cont'd) has been wondering what is the good or proper thing to do with respect to her household. She is trying to weigh her own obligations to her son and long away husband against what is beneficial for herself, which might mean leaving her house to marry the best of the suitors who now desire her. Her dream is a speculation about what might happen should Odysseus come home to kill all of the suitors. Penelope is not certain whether she would even be happy should Odysseus succeed. She may no longer know him as she did. Penelope has been relating her dream to Odysseus himself who is yet disguised as a beggar. He reassures her that this dream portends only the best things, to which she replies that there are two gateways for ghostly dreams, one of ivory and one of horn. Those dreams which come through ivory deceive completely, but those which come through horn may be borne out "*if mortals only know them.*" The knowledge which Penelope seeks is much different from that which Critias characterizes as knowledge. See *Odyssey*, XIX 564-567.

[157]The example of generals is an odd one. One might expect that should knowledge be leading the way, we would not have war. As Socrates later suggests, it is only when there is no possibility of counsel that violence is necessary. Is he pointing here to the impossibility that all people should be led by common good; he has in fact prefaced the dream by an appeal to self-interest.

[158]Socrates does not say that they would produce the most beautiful, or the best things simply.

addition," what he means by "knowledgeably."[159]

Socrates would seem to have reached the crux of the problem. Critias believes the moderation which he understands as a knowledge of knowledge and non-knowledge is the moderation which can define the greatest Utopia, but Socrates contends that to justify this, one would have to show how acting knowledgeably would mean that we would *do* well and be happy. Socrates thus confronts directly the issue which he had touched only obliquely when the dialogue began. He had said then that Charmides' father's side of the family, and thus Critias' side, was "distinguished in beauty and virtue, and in the rest of what is called happiness" (157e-158a). Socrates was ambiguous there as to what substantially would determine such happiness, and he here raises the question again. Since Critias agrees that artisans "live knowledgeably," but does not agree that as a consequence they are necessarily happy, then it would seem that not just any knowledge confers happiness. So the philosopher says he is "longing" to know *which* of the knowledges makes a man happy (174a). Critias does not question the philosopher's supposition that it would be knowledge which would make men happy. He is surrounded, however, by men who might beg to differ. And if he is predominately the lover of honor Socrates alleges him to be, he ought to beg to differ himself.

Thus Socrates begins to question Critias as to which of the knowledges *in particular* would make men happy. He is prepared for the sake of argument to consider someone as knowledgeable as we might imagine God to be, "ignorant of nothing." He allows by this that such a man would have a comprehensive and substantial knowledge of the knowledges, including knowledge of the future, past, and "what is now" (i.e., the present and the eternal). But by knowing what, of all that he knows, would make him happy? The philosopher, however, does not pause for Critias' answer, but immediately suggests the surprising example of draught-playing. The proposed subject is promptly dismissed by Critias, who doubtless regards the suggestion as facetious. He is equally adamant against calculation, even though earlier he had likened moderation as a knowledge to it.[160] Socrates then asks

[159]Socrates used the same expression earlier when he said that Charmides, with all of his physical beauty, would be unbeatable should he have "one little thing besides, good nature in his soul" (154e).

[160]See 165e-166a. Draught-playing is the Platonic metaphor for dialectics, and

Critias whether the knowledge they are seeking is that by which one knows the healthful, an example of knowledge which Critias had earlier said was *unlike* moderation (165ce). Critias is now more amenable to the possibility. He does not, however, give Socrates a definite answer, so Socrates questions him again as to which knowledge particularly is such as to make a man happy. Critias answers "that by which he knows the good and and the bad" (174b).

4.2.2 Knowledge of the Good

Critias had begun his conversation with Socrates with a definition of *soprosyne*, "the doing of one's own things," which, under Socrates' questioning, he soon modified to "the doing of good things." But the new definition served only to make explicit a problem which was implicit in the original: that it is hard to recognize what one's own good is, and thus hard to recognize "whatever doing one's own things is" (162b). Critias had proposed, then, that moderation is self-knowledge. It was at this point that the philosopher reminded him that they had been requiring that moderation be both beautiful and good. Socrates wondered, then, what work would be produced for us by such self-knowledge so as to be worthy of the name moderation. Critias ignored the possibility that self-knowledge is requisite to making oneself beautiful and good (*kalso kai agathos*, a "gentleman"), and instead suggested that moderation is "knowledge both of the other knowledges and itself of itself" (166c). Socrates then interpreted Critias to mean by this that moderation as knowledge of knowledge would entail knowing both what one knows and what one does not, as a consequence of which one would enjoy a certain mastery over others through knowledge. On Critias' assent, the philosopher proceeded to investigate how such knowledge was possible.

Critias' final version of moderation, knowledge of knowledge and non-knowledge, did not close the door, then, on the question of the good itself, for Critias finally realizes that he identifies knowledge of the good with the kind of comprehensive knowledge of knowledge by which he would order his utopian city. Socrates, on the other hand, admonishes him, calling

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[160](cont'd) calculation is the first of the studies the philosopher recommends for those who seem to be candidates for philosophic kingship (cf. *Republic* 487bd, 522c ff.).

him a wretch and accusing Critias of dragging the philosopher around in a circle, "concealing that it was not living knowledgeably that makes one do well and be happy, not even if it be with all of the knowledges together, but with one alone, of the good and the bad" (174bc).[161] Socrates thus proceeds to investigate this point. He asks Critias that if one were to take away from the arts knowledge of the good, would doctoring make one any the less healthy, or piloting any the less prevent one from dying at sea, or generalship in war, and Critias replies, "no less" (174c). It is possible, therefore, for the arts to attain a certain technical perfection without this knowledge, but Socrates insists that without knowledge of the good, "we will be deprived of having each of these [arts] done well and beneficially (174d)," for we would not, then, be able to distinguish good workmanship from bad, nor determine when the art is well-employed and when not.

Socrates thus says that this knowledge of the good "whose work is to benefit us," cannot be moderation if moderation is, as they had defined, simply a knowledge of knowledges and of non-knowledges. On this basis, Socrates says that moderation cannot be seen as beneficial because it is a craftsman of no benefit, that work having been given away to the art of the good. This would mean, also, that neither is doctoring, the knowledge of health, a craftsman of benefit, if it is separated from a knowledge of the good. As Tuckey observes, without knowledge of the good, technical perfection might exist, but there would not be any knowledge by which to direct this technology to our benefit; "a doctor, for instance, might cure a man when in reality it would have been better for him to die."[162]

Critias had presumed that knowledge of something is itself good, and perhaps it is, but he has given no indication that he truly *knows* this. He has, it seems, an attenuated understanding of the epigram attributed to Socrates, "Virtue is knowledge." Socrates demonstrates, however, that there is not a necessary connection between the "good" of a particular art (or what we might call its technical perfection), and what is beneficial for us. Indeed, as Socrates points out in the *Republic*, a skillful craftsman is equally capable of

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[161]Socrates had called Charmides a wretch when he had repeated--without understanding it, as was soon made clear--Critias' definition of moderation, the doing of one's own things, 161bc.
[162]Tuckey, p.79.

employing his art to good or bad purposes.[163] Thus, we are left with the conclusion that moderation, as a knowledge of knowledge and non-knowledge is a "craftsman of no benefit" (175c). And yet, without knowledge of knowledge and non-knowledge, one cannot distinguish knowledge from mere opinion, and thus one cannot philosophize. Critias is not able to show Socrates, then, the connection between knowledge and the good or why knowing itself is good, making us good and happy. But does Critias' inability to do so stem from the fact that he finally separates knowledge of knowledge from self-knowledge?

4.2.3 Knowledge of Oneself

Socrates turns his attention to himself to understand the inquiry. He takes the blame for the fact that "what is agreed to be most beautiful of all" now appears to them to be something unbeneficial (175ab). The reason he gives for their having reached such a conclusion is that he himself has not been of "any benefit with regard to inquiring beautifully " (175b). Thus, he gracefully takes all the blame for an apparently unsuccessful investigation, assuaging the honor-loving Critias' wounded pride. Perhaps it is precisely in his denying that he has inquired beautifully that he reveals his own ability to "examine others more beautifully" (cf. 172b). Be that as it may, the result of this, he says, is that they finally lack the power to comprehend what it is on which the law-giver set the name "moderation."[164] The question of the beauty of moderation thus re-emerges after having been apparently ignored in favor of the question of its good. The moderation which they investigated has *appeared*, however, to be unbeneficial such that Socrates' fear that he might ever suppose he knew something when he did not (166d), as well as his fear that they were not investigating correctly (172e), were both justified. They have discovered nothing useful about moderation, and as one would not expect that the most beautiful should be utterly without benefit, what they discovered cannot be moderation.

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[163]See *Republic*, 333d-334b.

[164]The expression "the law-giver," *o nomothetes*, is a quazi-homonym of "name-giver" *onomothetes*.

Socrates, recapitulates, then, the concessions which they had made to the inquiry. They had first conceded that a knowledge of knowledge itself could exist, even though their argument did not, at least not obviously, declare it. Then to this knowledge they conceded that it could recognize the works of the other knowledges, although the arguement did not allow this either. And finally they conceded that which might seem most unreasonable of all, that one could know what one does not at all know. Having generously conceded all of this, however, they still could not say how such knowledge would be good for us; the question of the good, then, yet haunts the inquiry. Socrates has shown that knowledge of the good is not congruent with the knowledge of knowledge and non-knowledge as Critias understands it. How are we able then to know our own good?

Socrates reminds us that the inquiry was not exclusively his: "*we*," he says, "are everywhere worsted" (175b). There are grounds for suspecting, however, that the conclusions which have emerged are conclusions which reflect the limitations of Critias. Socrates' "self-reflection" as to why the inquiry had failed is meant to indicate this. Though they showed themselves to be "simple and unstubborn;" freely making concessions where perhaps they should not, they were unable to discover the truth. In fact their simpleness and unstubbornness bespoke a certain lack of shame before the truth; the inquiry, conceding all that it did, laughed at the truth and in its *hubris* made it quite apparent that the conception of moderation they were fabricating was unbeneficial.[165] By not making something beautiful and beneficial, they have not been moderate according to Critias' first definition of the virtue. By saying now, however, that this moderation is actually "unbeneficial" (*anopheles*), Socrates suggests that it may in fact work against our benefit to live according to a moderation which takes our attention away from ourselves and our true benefit, and encourages us to rely upon a knowledge which presumes that it is itself good, and that our good is its good.

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[165]This is the only time the word *hubris* appears in the dialogue. If Socrates is suggesting that there may be a kind of shame before the truth, then it is appropriate that he should characterize the inquiry in this way, for the two people who act as his interlocutors demonstrate that they feel shame before things other than the truth.

Having examined himself and the inquiry, Socrates turns to Charmides, the young man for whom this inquiry was made. He says he is annoyed for Charmides because if he has such moderation in his soul, the young man will not himself profit from it nor will it be any benefit to him in his life. Socrates thus reminds us that the inquiry had begun with Socrates wishing to contemplate Charmides' soul, to see if it had good nature in it. Critias then had suggested that Socrates act as a physician to Charmides' "head weakness." Socrates agreed to do so, saying that the cure involved both an incantation and a leaf. He was acting, he said, on the advice of foreign doctors who had said that one must treat the soul with these incantations, or beautiful speeches, before the leaf or the drug could be of any benefit, for "everything starts from the soul, both bad and good things for the body and for the entire human being" (156e-157a). The incantations, he said, were to bring moderation into the soul. It had been suggested in the inquiry with Critias that one could not act moderately without knowing oneself to be moderate. This would require, it seems, knowledge of the soul in which moderation must reside. By his failure to recognize the soul's reflexive power, however, Critias in effect denied that such knowledge was possible, even though at that very moment Socrates was making it apparent how such knowledge is possible. On Critias' account, however, self-knowledge came to be understood as a knowledge directed toward *techne* and its power. On the other hand, Socrates had suggested by his questions that one could only know what was good for oneself, what one needed, by knowing one's soul. This very activity, however, of trying to know the soul would seem itself to bring good order to it, for the inquiry itself necessitates a certain kind of soul. By knowing oneself in this way, one will truly know what is good for one; if moderation is this good order of the soul, it will be supported by the knowledge that it is good. It will thus be enduring. If happiness is doing what is good for oneself, then one will be truly happy.

Socrates advises Charmides to undertake this inquiry, so that the young man will benefit from the moderation which may be present in his soul. The philosopher suggests by this that it is possible for a certain preliminary or derivative kind of moderation to exist in the soul without self-knowledge, but it seems that this moderation will not necessarily or

automatically be turned to one's true benefit. *Sophrosyne* in the fullest sense requires such self-knowledge. Socrates thus makes Charmides look to his own good. Charmides can employ the moderation which now exists in his soul (based on conventional opinions and supported by external restraints) in order to gain the self-knowledge by which he can know for himself what is good for himself.[146] If the young man should find that he has moderation, and is not in need of the incantation, he will also be that much the happier. If he should find that he is in need of the incantation, however, by undertaking this inquiry Charmides will be providing his own cure; he will be introducing true moderation into his soul.

4.3 176a-176d Moderation and Charmides

Charmides swears as he did before and again confesses his impotence. He says that as Socrates and Critias, his superiors, cannot discover what moderation is then how would he know if he has it. The young man goes on to say, however, that he does not quite believe the philosopher, and Charmides seems to mean by this that he does not believe that the philosopher knows nothing about moderation. Surely Socrates has just provided a demonstration of his great ability to inquire into such things. Thus Charmides supposes himself to be in need of the incantation, and says that for his part nothing prevents it from being chanted by Socrates until Socrates says it is sufficient. Socrates had counselled Charmides to inquire into himself to see if he is truly in need of moderation. Charmides replies that he has already done so; he needs a teacher like Socrates who can give him the beautiful speeches which he needs for moderation. But, has Socrates not just provided such speeches? Has he not just demonstrated his own moderation in the beautiful speeches of the dialogue? What has Charmides finally gained from the conversation?

Charmides had spoken directly to the philosopher, but Critias replies in his place. He tells his ward, "it will be evidence, at least for me, that you are moderate, if you submit to Socrates to chant and don't abandon him either in much or little" (176b). He thus resumes a position of authority over his ward which had appeared to be at least shaken by the

[146]The point to be noted, however, is that this kind of conventional moderation can give one the power to undertake such a task. Indeed, it may be essential.

philosopher's investigation of the profundity of Critias' knowledge. At the same time as he publicly recognizes Socrates' own authority with respect to moderation, he reaffirms his confidence in his own opinion. He speaks, that is, as if his own opinion should still carry weight with his ward even though Socrates has shown this opinion to be incoherent. What has Critias finally gained from the conversation?

Charmides replies dutifully to his guardian. He reassures him that he will do Critias' bidding, saying that "I would be doing something terrible if I wouldn't obey you, my guardian, and do what you bid me" (176c). Without the participation of the philosopher, the two agree that Charmides should become a student of Socrates. It is an odd agreement, one which seems both to acknowledge Critias' loss of authority on certain matters and yet to confirm his capacity as guardian. Socrates' beautiful speeches, then, can only go so far; there are some things, perhaps like Charmides' bond to his guardian, which they are not able to undo and still remain beautiful.

The philosopher thus interrupts, and speaking as if the other two have been quietly plotting something, asks them what they are "taking counsel to do" (176c). Charmides will not tell him, in keeping with his allegiance to Critias; they have taken counsel, they do not need the philosopher for this. Socrates then reminds us of his earlier concern that Charmides will use violence, and not be open to any sort of persuasion; he thus recognizes the limitations of Charmides' willingness for beautiful speeches. Charmides confirms these limitations: he will do whatever Critias orders him to do, and he advises the man who now is supposed to be his teacher to take counsel in view of this.

Socrates thus concludes the stripping of Charmides' soul. He grants that should the young man wish to do anything at all but especially to do anything by violence, no one will have the power to oppose him. The philosopher's observation is two-faced, praising Charmides' great abilities, but blaming his ultimate need to resort to violence even though counsel would be better. Charmides may wish to become Socrates' student, he may even use violence against him to do so, but as Socrates ironically observes in conclusion, the philosopher cannot teach the young man anything which he is unwilling or unable to learn.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The problem of violence in political life has been present throughout the dialogue. The looming spectre of the Peloponnesion War, nearly three decades of fratricidal strife, provides the backdrop for this dialogue on moderation. It began with Socrates' return to the city from the opening round of that war, the battle of Potidaea. The dialogue now ends on an ominous note, Socrates' prophetic remarks about the potential of Charmides, and, by implication, of Critias, for violence. That Critias should collaborate with the enemies of his city to impose a brutal tyranny over it, becoming himself its most extreme tyrant, and that Charmides should become his lieutenant should no longer entirely perplex us. Socrates, perhaps, has compromised Critias' claim to rule insofar as his claim to knowledge has been called into question, and thus the philosopher may have also tempered Charmides' allegiance to his guardian, but the conclusion of the dialogue starkly portrays the limitations of the philosopher's power. We are "forewarned," then, to expect violence from such men. Socrates thus reveals the ultimate superficiality of these men's *sophrosyne*, and points to consequences such a lack of *sophrosyne* can lead. The problem for us, then, is to comprehend *sophrosyne* in its fullness, and despite our possible aporia, we are able to note certain significant features of Plato's dialogue on the question.

Return first to the long prologue which introduces the explicit investigation of the virtue. It begins with the rumours of war. We are encouraged in this sense to expect an account of a fierce and bloody battle, perhaps we are even morbidly curious, as people generally are, as to the number and manner of death of the many who were said to have been killed. If so, we are disappointed. Socrates tells us that he answered all the questions of the men in the Palaestra, but unlike these men, we are not allowed to share "the gory details." Instead, Socrates quickly turns the narration to the things which interest him, philosophy and the young. We must temper, then, our own morbid curiousity if we wish to continue the dialogue. Upon the entrance of Charmides our interest is again aroused by the report of all the erotic activity surrounding this incredibly beautiful young man. Chaerephon broaches the suggestion that we should strip him to receive the benefit of a full view of his nakedness. The

men in the Paleastra appear to be enthusiastic about the idea. Socrates acknowledges the physical beauty of the youth, but himself proposes that before we actually strip his body, we should examine his soul. It is a rude, and perhaps suitably comic reprimand to our baser sexual desire. When Charmides comes to sit between the philosopher and his guardian, the many men in the Paleastra crowd around them; perhaps if they indulge the philosopher's "soul-stripping", they can later indulge their own desires.

But, if we, as self-conscious readers, reflect upon our own reactions to the drama, Socrates may have taught us something about moderation. His allusions to war and *eros* have tweaked certain of our lower desires and passions, but however strongly we may react, Socrates' silence as to what we might want to hear most, accounts of a bloody battle and graphic descriptions of a beautiful youth's nudity, effectively reprimands our own immoderation. The prologue thus provides us with an opportunity not only to consider what Socrates may be silently teaching here about the control of our bodily appetites and desires, but also to reflect upon our own selves, our own lack of *sophrosyne*. Indeed, we hear that Charmides is not well and Socrates suggests that this may stem from a lack of this virtue. If we have been at all attentive to ourselves, perhaps we will recognize the extent of our own disease.

Charmides, however, believes himself to have *sophrosyne*, if we trust that he accepts his guardian's and others' opinions about himself. Thus, Socrates asks the young man to prove that he has the virtue by looking into himself and telling what it is. Charmides tries, but the philosopher demonstrates how little the young man really understands of what he is saying. Socrates thus effectively strips Charmides of the opinion that he has *sophrosyne*, an opinion which seemed to be preventing the youth from profoundly investigating the nature of his own soul, and the question of *sophrosyne* itself. He would not be open to learn, that is, what he believed he already knew, nor to strive for what he believed he already had. Socrates thus demonstrates in his treatment of the young man that true moderation may in fact require recognizing one's ignorance of oneself, and thereby beginning a self-conscious investigation into one's nature. He also demonstrates, however, that shame may prevent such an

investigation, not only because it might make one balk at breaching certain socially accepted norms, but also because it might make one hesitant to challenge one's own dearly held opinions about oneself.

Thus it is that Socrates' arguments with Charmides point to the necessity of understanding, first, that *sophrosyne* is something which dwells in the soul, rather than considering only its superficial manifestations at the level of the body, and second, that the peculiarly human passion of shame (*aidos*), though normally and rightfully associated with moderation, is not simply good, especially should it impedes one's learning. Socrates, then, has been acting as a physician to our own souls: he has not only engaged our mind with arguments about the virtue, but he has tempered our desires and passions. By having been opened to learning by being made aware of our own ignorance with respect to *sophrosyne*, and by the tempering of our desires and passions which may have inclined us toward other pursuits, we are prepared for the deeper investigation of *sophrosyne* to which we turn in the conversation with Critias.

The philosopher's own *sophrosyne*, moreover, has been on display for our benefit in the grace and prudence with which he deals with himself and others. If we have carefully watched Socrates' handling of the argument, we may see how the philosopher is able to control the conversation so as finally to draw Critias into the discussion. By refuting the definition of Critias' young ward, Socrates calls into question both Critias' education of Charmides and the immoderate praise with which his guardian had lavished him. Critias, who until his entrance into the conversation had been keeping a judicious silence toward a discussion which threatened to expose some of his own worst tyrannical tendencies, can no longer control himself; his love of honor compels him to speak. Socrates seems to have recognized the strength of this love in Critias, and exploits it successfully. Furthermore, in Critias we can see how one's love of honor, which in his case is strongly tied to his love of his own beliefs, can also inhibit one's knowing the truth, and in particular one's knowing the truth about oneself. Thus Socrates repeatedly directs Critias to consider only *logos* as the true persuader, while repeatedly insisting upon his own ignorance about the truth of what is said.

If we are to take our example from Socrates, *sophrosyne* would seem to be tied to a certain humility before the truth. The philosopher's own *sophrosyne* is on display, then, both in the control which he appears to have over those passions and desires which, according to his own report, constantly threaten to overwhelm *logos*, and in his understanding of the soul as manifested in the control which he has over others through understanding each one's peculiar constellation of desires, wishes, loves, and fears.

The explicit conversation between Critias and Socrates about *sophrosyne*, however, is very strange, further challenging whatever stubborn opinions we may retain about the virtue. It may not be altogether surprising that the discussion should lead to the possibility that *sophrosyne* can somehow be understood as self-knowledge, given the dialogue's tacit encouragement to its readers to proceed with their own self-examination. What is more strange, however, is the context in which this possibility is discussed. Critias had at first accepted as his own, the definition that *sophrosyne* is the doing of one's own things, but when the philosopher challenged him to say precisely what one's own things really are, Critias in effect claimed as one's own anything and everything which could redound to one's benefit. We could see in this how such a belief would lead to an unrestrained claim to the actual possessions of others. Instead of calling Critias on this point, however, Socrates moves the discussion in the direction of the arts, apparently wishing to know how one can comprehend *sophrosyne* in this context. Critias accepts the application of *sophrosyne* to the practice of the arts, but only insofar as the results of such are achieved self-consciously. This necessitates, Critias claims, self-knowledge. But he later characterizes this self-knowledge as a kind of comprehensive knowledge of the knowledges and non-knowledges, which in effect gives one the power to ensure *sophrosyne* with respect to the arts by ensuring that only the most knowledgeable craftsmen, and thus the ones least likely to make mistakes, are chosen to practice a particular art.

Thus, what we would commonsensically understand self-knowledge to be (e.g., knowing one's passions and reason and appetites, how they interact, etc.) is never explicitly investigated. Instead, we become concerned with the nature of the arts, and how *sophrosyne*

may be understood with respect to the actual good work or efficacy of an art. This leads us finally to a consideration of the political question, how one would manage moderately or "sound-mindedly" a polis. This was, one might recall, the question upon which Charmides' attempt to define *sophrosyne* as the doing of one's own things foundered.

Having turned away from an explicit investigation of *sophrosyne* as self-knowledge, then, the greater part of the conversation which leads Socrates and Critias to this political question is a consideration of the possibility of a knowledge of knowledge and non-knowledge, meaning knowledge of what formally constitutes each of the knowledges and what substantially they involve. However, in his challenge to Critias to prove how such a reflexive knowledge is truly possible, we have the opportunity both to follow the philosopher's own implicit investigation of this reflexivity, and to reflect ourselves on the various motions of the soul which he surveys. Thus we may begin to see how what we commonly understand to be self-knowledge is possible. We are able to consider, through this underlying investigation of *sophrosyne* as self-knowledge, how one is able to become the object of one's own concern and how knowledge of oneself, one's body and soul, effectively opens up the possibility that one can order one's soul as one sees fit, pruning certain desires in favour of others, strengthening one's will, discarding or avoiding certain loves in preference for others, and overcoming certain fears. Given this possibility, then, the question would seem to be what is the most beautiful and beneficial way to order one's soul. If we are to take our cue from Socrates, from his humility before the truth and from his power to inquire beautifully, we can perhaps consider how *sophrosyne*, if it is to be beneficial and beautiful, should somehow instill both this humility and this power.

Socrates would seem to be investigating *sophrosyne*, then, at both the level of the city and at the level of the soul. His doing so finally brings us to the question of whether "moderately" ordering a polis so as to secure the most efficacious workmanship of the arts, a commonly imagined kind of Utopia, would in the final analysis make us happy. He thus ends the dialogue with not only the question as to what *sophrosyne* is, but also the question as to what makes men happy. The two questions, he seems to suggest, are connected. If we had

discovered the idea of *sophrosyne* which is both beautiful and beneficial for us, we would have come a long way, it seems, to answering the question what makes us happy. Our aporia, however -- our awareness, that is, of our ignorance about human nature and thus of ourselves -- should restrain any dreams we may have of Utopia, technical or otherwise. It should makes us wonder what is beautiful and beneficial for man, what makes us happy, what is in fact possible for the individual and for the city. As we have seen, the dialogue suggests the various ways in which we might best proceed to investigate these questions, and thus provides the resources by which we can satisfy ourselves as to the possibility of some substantial answers, but it also, most importantly, demonstrates our need of *sophrosyne*, both to restrain ourselves from prematurely believing that we know what we do not know, namely what is beautiful and beneficial for the man and for the city, and to give us the power to undertake an investigation into such questions, an investigation which promises to be long and hard, requiring all the *sophrosyne* one can muster.

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